



Add Play To Your Work.... Winter 2009

New England Association for Play Therapy.



Helping Them Understand

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When they walked into the room, they seemed shy and reserved. They had no idea what to expect. The course title stated Play Therapy. They assumed that it involved working with kids in therapy. When they stepped out of the class, they realized it was so much more. That's the reason teaching a course in play therapy at a graduate level has been so exciting.

The first step in getting the course onto the roster at the university included convincing the faculty and administration that the topic was relevant. This was no easy feat. They questioned the importance of learning these skills for those students in the general track. They believed play therapy was intended for kids only. Educating them was the first step.

Helping others learn about play therapy has become second nature. Across all the facets of work I do, I have had to explain and share the value of play and the ability that these techniques have to reach deeper to process the issues an individual brings to therapy. I work with schools, child service programs, and the courts as I conduct evaluations and consultations. Each place varies in their understanding of the impact of play as a mode to understand the issues as the children and families experience them. Many times, I hear surprise from them regarding the value of play therapy in different settings. The university decided to take a chance and open the door to the world of play.

Teaching the course at the university provided a forum for reaching a group of emerging psychologists about the value of play. The students who attended included those who were focused on work with children as well as those who simply wanted to learn more despite their preference for working with adults.

The class explored the history of play therapy as well as discussed the techniques and tools used in sessions.

Many times the question was posed, "If I am playing (whatever toy or game they mentioned), does that mean I am doing play therapy with my client?" Educating the students about the value of the games chosen, the ways in which to use the items of play, and the metaphors that come from the play was effective. They began to grasp the deeper understanding that the toys were the tools to communicate. They understood the metaphors that derive from types of play and play themes. They realized that the toys had multiple uses and not solely the use that the game designers had in mind. They began to understand how important creativity can be in the therapeutic process. They learned the importance of the communication surrounding the play. They gained deeper understanding about the importance of their relationships with their clients.

All in all, the class was a success. Each student grasped the concepts and the play helped them feel more comfortable using these newfound tools again. A variety of toys and art supplies enriched their learning as they began to explore creative ways they could reach their clients; young or old. They explored ways to manage difficult situations as well as resistance from their clients. They were able to incorporate a new way to reach their clients, understand the issues, and process the emotions. In the end, they began to translate the metaphors from the play into effective strategies to help clients. They developed sound understanding to the value of play and the healing nature of the activities. Ultimately, that is what play is all about.

Hello to you all.... I hope that the upcoming spring holds lots of positive thoughts, hope and energy to produce new life in your life and practice. In this time of economic bad news with all of its horrible ripples, hopefully not directly into your life or your pocketbook, I want to say how appreciative I am of you! Yes, You! I know you are a lot like me, you wear many hats. You are a mental health professional who is looking at the children and families in your practice, your life and your community and is very concerned. Personally, I'm concerned about the state of play in my own life as well as in my community. With this in mind, I have been very excited in the past few weeks about all of the positive press play is getting and I'm hoping that those who are working on the national education reform issues are paying attention. I'm including several links at the bottom of this note that I think you will find fascinating and hopeful as well. I'm enjoying lively conversation and debate with educators, parents, and community members on this as well. I know you are also an advocate for play in children's lives or you wouldn't be in this field.

While I notice that many benefits of play are being outlined beautifully... specifically, kids who spend more time in free play are better problem solvers, more academically prepared, have higher frustration tolerance etc. I'm concerned that I am not seeing the therapeutic benefits of play mentioned nearly as much as I would like. I believe that all play, especially when facilitated by an attentive adult is magically therapeutic. I think we need to add our voices to the discussion. I hope you are attending events in your areas, getting involved in the schools your children, your clients and your communities are involved in. Recess is critical!!! Free play time, in safe, stimulating environments is critical!!! Gobs of homework and repetitive, rout learning is not. Let's get our voices heard in this debate too.

Thanks for listening to my rants; hopefully it has worked you up just a bit too. Please use the cites below to stimulate your communities' processes as you discuss play's multitude of benefits. I would love to hear from you about what your communities are doing to promote more play in our children's lives. I wish you a happy and healthy spring..... personally, I can't wait to dig my toes and fingers into the dirt and help something GROW!!!

Sarah O'Brien, President, NE-APT

"The Serious Need for Play" <http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=the-serious-need-for-play>

"The Three R's. A 4th is Crucial too: Recess" http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/24/health/24well.html?_r=2&8dpc

"Where do the Children Play?" PBS documentary \$20. <http://www.wfum.org/childrenplay/index.html> My community is using this film at special community nights to prompt discussion about play and safe spaces. I was so impressed, I now own it and am using it in my classes.

Thank You to Kay Edwards and to Adoption Rhode Island for working together with us to create a fabulous training for the Rhode Island Play Therapy/Children's Services community to meet our ethics ceu requirement before the upcoming deadline! What a great morning we had on Friday. It was so fun to see so many familiar faces as well as get some new names for our ever growing mailing list. Kay sparked a lively and lovely discussion about ethical dilemmas and documentation (Yes, I'm serious... it was great). I learned that I'm a turtle with wings, which was a fun image to create as well as work with for my own process. Thanks again Kay and Malaina!

NE-APT Training Guide: Upcoming Training Announcements:

The following workshops (unless otherwise listed) are offered by or in conjunction with the New England Association for Play Therapy. NE-APT is APT Provider #02-123.

March 20-21st, 2009 Sandtray - Worldplay with Gisela De Domenico PhD.

Day 1 – Exploring the Interface of Dynamic Expressive Play Therapy and various Sandtray-Worldplay methods. Presentation, experiential exploration and discussion of various therapy sessions. Experiential use of sandplay by workshop participants.

Day 2 Morning – Exploring multiple levels of meaning communicated in the sandtray. History, theory and training in the method. Application of the method. Demonstration and practice sessions.

Day 2 Afternoon – An advanced Sandtray-Worldplay experiential exercise for a small group of experienced therapists. Up to CEU 11.5 hours. Contact: btosti@town.arlington.ma.us

April 17-18th, 2009 Developmentally Sensitive Posttraumatic Play Therapy with Janine Shelby, Ph.D., RPT-S. Rochester, NY. NY-APT Annual Conference. See www.ny-apt.org for details. APT#98-044.

May 12-June 13th Sandplay/Worldplay Workshops Levels 1-5 with Gisela DeDomenico PhD, LMFT, RPT-S. Old Orchard Beach, Maine. www.vision-quest.us/vqisr
sandtrayworldplay@gmail.com APT Provider #95-018. Or call 510 530-1383.

June 11th, 2009 Doing Child Centered Play Therapy with Sarah O'Brien, LICSW. RPT-S. Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA. 6 hrs. <http://www.bc.edu/schools/gssw/academics/ce.html>

July 27 - 31, 2009 (Monday-Friday, 9:30-12:45, 15 CE hours) Skill-Building for Children with ADHD: A Play Therapy Approach Daniel Yeager, LCSW, RPT-S. Registration www.playtherapyworks.com, APT# 00-098.

August 3 - 7, 2009 (Monday-Friday, 9:30-12:45, 15 CE hours) Sand Therapy Theory and Application: Integrating Sand Therapy and Play Therapy Eliana Gil, Ph.D., RPT-S. Info and registration at www.playtherapyworks.com, APT# 00-098.

SAVE THE DATE..... September 26th, 2009 Eliana Gil in Boston.... Details to follow. Yes, this workshop is a Saturday in response to a more friendly time for those of you in school settings, I hope it works well for the rest of you too. www.newenglandplaytherapy.org.

Remember, regardless of whom the presenter is, if the workshop announcements do not state APT approval with a provider number, APT will not approve it for RPT/RPT-S application or renewal. If you are not a member, please join to receive the member discounts plus many more benefits outlined on www.a4pt.org Check for updated announcements on www.NewEnglandPlayTherapy.org