

- 1.What is play therapy?
- 2.Why play therapy?
- 3.How do I know it's helping?
- 4.How do I prepare my child for his/her 1st session?

1. Play therapy is a recognized and researched type, or modality, of therapy. It is not just letting a child play with toys while the therapist watches or plays with them. Child Centered Play Therapy (CCPT) is a specific type of evidenced based play therapy where a trained therapist uses a variety of strategies when working with a child. CCPT differs from other play therapies in that the relationship built between child and therapist provides the foundation for which change happens.

2. When choosing therapy for your child, it is important to remember that children experience and make sense of the world differently than adults. The average adult has a fully developed brain to process speech and communicate verbally, life experiences to inform decisions and the power to decide to enter into therapy. Play therapy provides a developmentally appropriate setting for a child to engage in therapy in a way that fits their stage of life, rather than requiring them to fit into therapy intended for adults.

3. One key element you gain from play therapy is gaining a greater understanding of not only your child but yourself as a parent. This helps shift your mindset to allow for change. You can also expect parent consultation sessions to answer questions and gain knowledge of how your child is progressing in therapy. I use various assessments throughout the process to measure progress along the way. Lastly, you will likely notice differences in your child's affect and behavior at home such as fewer tantrums, greater ability to tolerate demands etc.

4. To help your child understand and feel comfortable with therapy, you can explain to them that a therapist is another type of "helper." Just like a teacher helps you learn about math, a therapist helps you learn about yourself and your feelings. Comments to avoid would be ones saying that your child needs to go to learn how to be good, how to stop being bad, etc. I would suggest watching this short clip with your child prior to their 1st session:

<https://youtu.be/fmKxvTtSWoc>