



# **Play Therapy for Abused & Traumatized Children**

## *A Bibliography*

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Global Response to Child Abuse**

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## Scope

This bibliography lists publications pertaining to play therapy in conjunction with abused and traumatized children, to include aspects of efficacy, perception, and general research & practice.

## Organization

Publications include articles, book chapters, reports, and research briefs and are arranged in date descending order. Links are provided to full text publications when possible. However, this collection may not be complete. More information can be obtained in the Child Abuse Library Online.

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# Play Therapy for Abused & Traumatized Children

## A Bibliography

Chung, R. K., Ray, D. C., Aguilar, E. V., & Turner, K. K. (2023). The multicultural play therapy room: Intentional decision making in selecting play therapy toys and materials. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 32(4), 197–207. DOI:10.1037/pla0000203

With the increased cultural diversity among the child population in the United States, play therapists are obligated to ensure cultural inclusivity in their clinical practice and attune to their diverse clientele. A crucial aspect of culturally inclusive play therapy is the construction of an inclusive and therapeutic environment—the multicultural play therapy room. The multicultural play therapy room is an environment that invites cultural exploration and expression for all children. We conducted a recent Delphi study that resulted in a clear definition of what constitutes a multicultural environment in play therapy, specifically a culturally inclusive playroom (Ray et al., 2022). Further results from the study provided reflection and rationale for decision making regarding materials for a multicultural play therapy room. The purpose of this article is to provide play therapists with a list of materials that represent a culturally inclusive playroom based on research. Furthermore, we provide a rationale for decision making when seeking to ensure the cultural inclusivity of a play therapy room.

Cormier, S. R., Manson, J. L., & Overley, L. C. (2023). Relational–cultural play therapy supervision: Integrating RCT into the supervision of play therapists. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 32(3), 135–145. DOI:10.1037/pla0000194

Relational–cultural theory, a counseling theory that centers the importance of relational connection and sociocultural influences, provides helpful guiding principles for a creative, interpersonally focused, and culturally attuned model for the supervision of play therapists-in-training. This article outlines the main concepts of a relational–cultural play therapy supervision approach and integrates it with the updated Association for Play Therapy (APT) phases of training and competencies to highlight how this approach can support the development of play therapists. Core concepts discussed include the importance and creation

of connection in the supervisory relationship, navigating disconnection and fostering relational resilience, recognizing and working with sociocultural influences, and the intentional use of relational competence in skills and techniques. Additionally, a case study based on the first author's experience is included to offer an illustration of relational-cultural play therapy supervision in action.

Frawley, C., Lambie, G. W., Stickl Haugen, J., & Dillman Taylor, D. (2023). The assessment of Play Therapy and Child Counseling Competencies (APTCCC). *International Journal of Play Therapy*. Advance online publication. DOI:10.1037/pla0000208

We developed the Assessment of Play Therapy and Child Counseling Competencies (APTCCC) to measure child and play therapy trainees' clinical counseling competencies. We tailored the APTCCC to align with (a) the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (2016) Standards; (b) the Association for Play Therapy (2022e) Play Therapy Competencies; and (c) the Association for Play Therapy (2022d) Play Therapy Best Practices: Clinical, Professional, and Ethical Issues. In our article, we review (a) developmental needs of child and play therapy counseling trainees, (b) the importance of comprehensive and child-specific competency evaluation measures, and (c) present the APTCCC as an appropriate tool for evaluating the growth and development of counselors-in-training working with children.

Normandin, L., Bate, J., Bégin, M., Fonagy, P., & Ensink, K. (2023). Play completion predicts fewer child psychological difficulties: A longitudinal study of mentalizing processes. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 32(2), 122–133. DOI:10.1037/pla0000195

Play therapy is widely used with children, including children who experienced sexual abuse. This longitudinal study examined whether more pretend play completion (PPC) at Time 1 predicted fewer child difficulties when this was assessed 3 years later at Time 2. Participants were 91 children (aged 3–8 at Time 1), including 51 children who experienced sexual abuse (child sexual abuse [CSA]). Play was coded with the Children's Play Therapy Instrument,

and child psychological difficulties were assessed with the Child Behavior Checklist. More PPC at Time 1 predicted fewer child psychological difficulties 3 years later at Time 2. This was the case in children who had experienced CSA as well as the comparison group, showing that PPC predicts better psychological adjustment in both abused and nonabused children. The study provides the first longitudinal evidence of the important role of pretend play narrative completion in predicting less internalizing and externalizing difficulties. The findings have important clinical implications for play therapists. It suggests that interventions that encourage children to elaborate and complete their play narratives could facilitate agency and psychological adjustment, as well as recovery after trauma. This is in line with the idea that through play children discover that they can “play with reality” and gain control over how they tell their stories.

Terradas, M. M., & Asselin, A. (2023). [Episodic experiences of child physical abuse, early relational trauma and post-traumatic play: Theoretical considerations and clinical illustrations](#). *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*, 16(2), 365-379.  
DOI:10.1007/s40653-022-00489-8

Through symbolic and make-believe play, children can give meaning to their emotional experiences. For children who have experienced trauma, play provides the means to transform their past and tame the intrusive images and feelings associated with it. The quality of parent–child interactions plays a vital role in the development of mental representational capacity, which is essential for children's ability to engage in symbolic play. However, in child maltreatment situations, the unpredictability and insecurity of the parent–child relationship can have a profound impact on children's ability to play. This article aims to explore how the post-traumatic play of children who have suffered from episodic experiences of physical abuse differs from that of children who have experienced early relational traumas (ERT) resulting from chronic exposure to maltreatment and neglect. A theoretical and clinical analysis of the first play therapy session of a child who lived episodic experiences of physical abuse and that of a child who was exposed to ERT is presented. This analysis is informed by the Children's Play Therapy Instrument and the theories proposed by Chazan and Cohen in *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, 36(2), 133–151 (2010), and Romano in *Le Journal Des Psychologues*, 279, 57–61 (2010). The nature of the relationship between children and their

primary caregivers and the child-therapist relationship are also discussed. ERT appear to compromise the development of diverse abilities in children. Among them, access to the world of mental representations, which depends to a large extent on the presence of mindful and attentive parents, and their ability to capture and respond contingently to the playful proposals of children.

Chase, L., & Post, P. (2022). Factors impacting play therapists' social justice advocacy attitudes. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 31(4), 248–258.  
DOI:10.1037/pla0000184

The population in the United States is becoming more racially diverse. Young children in minoritized groups have many disadvantages due to circumstances beyond their control. They experience more poverty (US Census Bureau [USCB], 2017), unequal educational opportunities (US Census Bureau, 2019), discriminatory practices (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009), trauma (Sacks & Murphey, 2018), mental health diagnoses, and inadequate mental health services. Mental health professionals who work with children, specifically play therapists, must be more responsive to the needs of these young children through both clinical works and social justice advocacy. To support racially diverse children, to support therapists in offering services, and to advocate on behalf of children, researchers need to explore factors that may influence their social justice advocacy attitudes. The purpose of this study was to examine how adverse childhood experiences, attitudes related to trauma-informed care, and cultural humility were related to social justice advocacy attitudes among play therapists. A standard multiple regression was utilized (N = 409). Results indicated that attitudes related to trauma-informed care and cultural humility contributed significantly to the prediction of social justice advocacy attitudes, accounting for 11% of the variance. Implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Conroy, J., & Perryman, K. (2022). Treating trauma with child-centered play therapy through the SECURE lens of polyvagal theory. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 31(3), 143-152. DOI:10.1037/pla0000172

There is increasing literature on the consequences of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). It is essential to utilize comprehensive treatment approaches for children to mitigate lasting effects. While child-centered play therapy (CCPT) has been established as an effective treatment for childhood trauma, the SECURE lens offers a potential neurobiologically informed understanding of why CCPT is so effective by means of the polyvagal theory. CCPT facilitates safety, engagement, coregulation, understanding of self, regulatory expansion, and exploration that are emphasized in polyvagal theory. This process expands emotional regulation, which is particularly helpful for children who have experienced trauma. The SECURE lens offers clinicians a neurobiological understanding of how CCPT works to heal the wounds left by ACEs. A case example is provided to demonstrate the application of the lens. While SECURE lens is conceptually grounded in polyvagal theory, it also offers a potential path forward in directly measuring the physiological effects of CCPT for future research for more conclusive neurobiological implications of the healing process.

Ray, D. C., Burgin, E., Gutierrez, D., Ceballos, P., & Lindo, N. (2022). [Child-centered play therapy and adverse childhood experiences: A randomized controlled trial](#). *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 100(2), 134–145. DOI:10.1002/jcad.12412

There is a preponderance of evidence that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) result in harmful physical, learning, social, emotional, and behavioral health outcomes during childhood, with far reaching effects lasting across the lifespan. The cumulative effect of childhood adversity and its relationship to childhood trauma represent an urgent call to action among stakeholders, yet treatment studies are rare. The purpose of this randomized controlled trial was to explore the impact of child-centered play therapy (CCPT) among children with two or more ACEs on improvement of social and emotional assets and behavioral problems. Results of a repeated measures linear mixed model demonstrated statistically significant increases in social-emotional competencies including empathy, social competence, and self-regulation/responsibility and decreases in total behavior problems.



among children who participated in CCPT. Results of this study support the effectiveness of CCPT among children who have experienced ACEs and at risk for complex trauma.

Hindman, M. L., Perryman, K. L., & Robinson, S. E. (2021). The adult public's perception of the utility of play therapy. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 31(1), 34–45. DOI:10.1037/pla0000164

Often parents are unaware of play's importance in children's counseling (Brumfield & Christensen, 2011; Landreth et al., 2006). There is little research on parents' knowledge of mental health services especially play therapy (Gallo et al., 2013; O'Connor & Langer, 2019). Literature supports the more knowledgeable parents are about mental health services, the more likely they are to take their children to therapy (e.g., Cunningham et al., 2008), and adults' mental health literacy improves with information (e.g., Jorm, 2000). The literature revealed no research specific to play therapy literacy or the general adult public. The present study focuses on the public's perception of play therapy's utility and whether play therapy information changes perceptions. Through Amazon Mechanical Turk, 298 participants completed a play therapy utility survey before and after receiving play therapy information. Prior to receiving information, participants believed play therapy to be useful. Initially, females indicated play therapy was more useful than male participants. The more knowledge of play therapy, the more useful the participant viewed it initially. Participants' ratings of the utility of play therapy did increase significantly after viewing a brief educational video. The influence of the educational experience appeared to vary by race, education level, and self-reported initial awareness of play therapy. Results suggest White individuals and those who have never heard of play therapy will be most impacted by educational play therapy outreach.

Polk, S. (2021). [Integrating TF-CBT and play therapy: Promoting resilience in child sexual assault](https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=11633&context=dissertations) [Doctoral Dissertation, Walden University].  
<https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=11633&context=dissertations>

Licensed social workers and counselors provide services to children who experience child sexual assault (CSA), which disrupt their normal childhood developmental processes.

Trauma outcomes include symptoms related to somatization, inability to cope, feelings of helplessness, decreased self-esteem, difficulty expressing proper emotions, anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder. Trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT) combined with play therapy can be helpful for CSA survivors. Still, it is not yet fully understood how therapists perceive the combined approach or how it fosters resiliency in children who experience sexual assault. The purpose of this action research study was (a) to explore the experiences and perspectives of trauma-informed licensed social workers and counselors who use a combined approach to TF-CBT and play therapy in treating children who were sexually abused and (b) to understand factors that increase resiliency in CSA survivors. The research question was guided by resilience theory, a strengths-based conceptual framework. An action research study with a qualitative research design was used with expert sampling to conduct a focus group with six participants. The data were transcribed and coded using thematic analysis. In vivo and descriptive coding, methods were used to identify themes. Findings revealed that alleviating trauma outcomes was possible with appropriate psychotherapy treatment, thus increasing resiliency outcomes. This study's results promote positive social change and efficacy on integrating TF-CBT and play therapy, strategies to increase resilience and vicarious resilience.

Stauffer, S. D. (2021). Overcoming trauma stuckness in play therapy: A superhero intervention to the rescue. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 30(1), 14–27.  
DOI:10.1037/pla0000149

Experiencing sexual abuse as a child is potentially traumatic. In this case study, 2 elementary school-aged boys presented for play therapy at the author's nonprofit clinic for sexual abuse treatment. Their play therapy processes were characterized by the engagement, disengagement, and avoidance of traumatic material typical of the trauma dialectic Herman (1992/2015) described. When the children were no longer able to experience mastery over their posttraumatic play or gain reprieve from the anxiety stemming from their experiences (Gil, 2017), the play therapist introduced a superhero play therapy intervention, using specific therapeutic powers of play (Schaefer & Drewes, 2014) according to prescriptive play therapy principles (e.g., Kaduson et al., 2020; Schaefer, 2018), to overcome the stuckness

(Stauffer & Pliske, 2019) and stagnation (Gil, 2017) she perceived in the process. This intervention, formulated from combined Adlerian and systemic perspectives, reflected each child's interests and strengths in drawing and acted as a springboard for embodying confidence and competence in social interactions. The stuckness previously observed in the therapy process dissipated, each child's psychological symptoms diminished, and they each terminated therapy shortly after the close of the superhero play therapy intervention.

Haas, S. C., & Ray, D. C. (2020). Child-centered play therapy with children affected by adverse childhood experiences: A single-case design. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 29(4), 223-236. DOI:10.1037/pla0000135

We conducted single-case research with 2 participants to explore the influence of child-centered play therapy (CCPT) on children who had 4 or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and analyzed data collected from the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire on a weekly basis and the Trauma Symptoms Checklist for Young Children at pre- and posttest. Both participants demonstrated significant improvement in total difficulties and prosocial behaviors, revealing potential therapeutic benefits for the use of CCPT with children who have 4 or more ACEs. The discussion of study results includes implications for practice, suggestions for future research, and limitations.

Meany-Walen, K. K. (2020). The current state of Adlerian Play Therapy published research. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 76(2), 176–186. DOI:10.1353/jip.2020.0005

Adlerian theory is a foundational approach to therapy and understanding human personality. Similarly, Adlerian play therapy is one of the most influential and popular theories of play therapy. In recent years, Adlerian play therapy has been the independent variable in a number of research designs and has demonstrated promising success for its effectiveness at improving children's behaviors and presenting concerns. Adlerian play therapy even reached status of evidence-based treatment as a result of such research. A review of the published research and implications for future designs are provided in this article.

Parker, M. M., Hergenrather, K., Smelser, Q., & Kelly, C. T. (2020). Exploring child centered play therapy and trauma: A systematic review of literature. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 30(1), 2-13. DOI:10.1037/pla0000136

Researchers continue to identify increasing rates of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and the devastating effects on individuals into adulthood. The relational focus of child-centered play therapy (CCPT) and the use of toys for personal expression better meets the developmental needs of children who experienced ACEs; however, CCPT is often not included within meta-analyses or explorations of efficacious treatments for children who experienced ACEs. To address this gap, the authors conducted a systematic literature review and explored the existing research on CCPT and ACEs. To explore the utility of CCPT to demonstrate significant therapeutic outcomes for children with a history of trauma. The authors identified 32 between-group design research studies exploring effect of CCPT on children experiencing ACES including childhood poverty, systemic discrimination, attachment difficulties, abuse, and parental incarceration. Additionally, the authors assessed the research quality and potential sources of biases within the identified studies. Findings indicate potential methodological limitations within the current studies and promising results for the use of CCPT with children who experience ACEs. Implications, limitations, and directions for future research are discussed.

Woollett, N., Bandeira, M., & Hatcher, A. (2020). [Trauma-informed art and play therapy: Pilot study outcomes for children and mothers in domestic violence shelters in the United States and South Africa](#). *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 107, 104564. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2020.104564

We used mixed methods to explore effects of a pilot intervention combining trauma focused cognitive behavior therapy (TF-CBT) (verbal therapy method) with art and play therapy (non-verbal therapy methods) in New York City and Johannesburg, to compare efficacy between high and low-middle income contexts. Participants and setting School-aged children and their mothers from one domestic violence shelter in each city were invited to participate. Children were screened for depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Children participated in a weekly group session lasting 1–2 hours over 12 weeks and mothers received 3 group sessions. Quantitative data comprised pre-and post-intervention child self-reports

(n = 21) and mother's report (n = 16) of child depressive and PTSD symptoms. Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with children (n = 11) and mothers (n = 8) who completed the intervention. At baseline, children showed high rates of symptoms of probable depression and probable PTSD (33 % and 66 % respectively). By endline, depressive symptoms significantly reduced (mean of 13.7–8.3,  $p = 0.01$ ) and there was a non-significant trend towards PTSD improvement (40.0–34.4,  $p = 0.21$ ). Children revealed the art helped them express difficult emotions and experiences with their mothers. Multiple children felt it assisted in managing challenging behaviours. This pilot trauma-informed art and play therapy group intervention holds promise in mitigating the effects of IPV for children and mothers in domestic violence shelters.

Fourie, A., & van der Merwe, M. (2019). Family play therapy in the context of child sexual abuse in South Africa. *Child Abuse Research in South Africa*, 20(1), 16-27.

This article provides an overview of a family play therapy intervention developed in the design and early development and pilot testing phase of an intervention research process. The family play therapy intervention was implemented with families affected by child sexual abuse (CSA). The families' reflections on how they experienced the family play therapy process and techniques implemented as part of the intervention process, will be described in this article.

Gavin, S., Meany-Walen, K. K., Murray, M., Christians, A., Barrett, M., & Kottman, T. (2019). Play therapists' attitudes toward using technology in the playroom. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 29(1), 1-8. DOI:10.1037/pla0000104

The use of technology such as Internet, cell phones, televisions, and video games is a staple part of many children and adults' lives (Harwood et al., 2011; Hull, 2015; National Association for the Education of Young Children & the Fred Rogers Center, 2012). Professionals disagree about the appropriateness of technology in play therapy settings (e.g., Hull, 2015; Landreth, 2012; Ray, 2012). We surveyed 40 registered play therapists or registered play therapist supervisors to specifically address play therapists' attitudes and

experiences using technology in play therapy. Support for using technology in playrooms was mixed; we defined and provided examples of the 5 themes that emerged from the interviews.

Goicoechea, J., & Fitzpatrick, T. (2019). To know or not to know: Empathic use of client background information in child-centered play therapy. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 28(1), 22-33. DOI:10.1037/pla0000087

Within a decidedly here and now framework, child-centered play therapists face a dilemma regarding use of background information. Gathering a psychosocial history is commonly recommended, but there is little discussion about how to make use of that information within a fundamentally nondirective approach. In child-centered play therapy (CCPT), the therapist does not direct the focus or content of therapy, nor does he or she aim at changing the child. Rather, the therapist attempts to understand the child from his or her own frame of reference and to accept the child exactly as he or she is in the present moment to facilitate the child's own constructive, creative, and self-healing power. This article explores a tension in the CCPT literature concerning whether or not therapist use of client background information impedes this nondirective, empathic attitude. Theoretical assumptions underlying the debate are examined, and empathy is theorized from a phenomenological perspective as both affective and cognitive, deeply relational, and aimed at understanding the child's present and past experiences. Case examples illustrate circumspect use of client background information consistent with CCPT. The article concludes with training and research implications.

Hall, J. G. (2019). Child-centered play therapy as a means of healing children exposed to domestic violence. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 28(2), 98-106. DOI:10.1037/pla0000097

Increasingly, domestic violence is being recognized as a major concern for children today. Hamby, Finkelhor, Turner, and Ormrod (2011) of the U.S. Department of Justice discovered that approximately 8.2 million children were exposed to some form of family violence in the past year and 18.8 million over their lifetime as reported by a national survey. Witnessing physical as well as psychological– emotional violence within the family can cause serious

detrimental effects to children. Younger children respond to domestic violence by having higher levels of psychological disturbance and display lower self-esteem than do older children. Likewise, other issues related to mental and physical health may manifest. Additionally, child witnesses of familial violence are taught to maintain the secret of violence; therefore, alternative forms to verbal expression are important in supporting this population. It is imperative that these child witnesses receive interventions that are developmentally appropriate and meet their unique needs. Play therapy has been proven to be a statistically effective means of treating externalizing and internalizing problems in children. Therefore, it is proposed that child-centered play therapy interventions be applied when working with children exposed to domestic violence.

Humble, J. J., Summers, N. L., Villarreal, V., Styck, K. M., Sullivan, J. R., Hechler, J. M., & Warren, B. S. (2019). [Child-centered play therapy for youths who have experienced trauma: A systematic literature review](#). *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*, 12(3), 365-375. DOI:10.1007/s40653-018-0235-7

This systematic review examines the literature on the effectiveness of child-centered play therapy (CCPT) for youths who have experienced traumatic events. Two independent reviewers conducted the search procedures, as well as all data extraction and coding. Seven peer-reviewed articles reporting treatment outcomes were included in the review. As the focus of the review was on CCPT, treatment methods were similar across the seven articles (e.g., use of similar materials). There was also some consistency in findings regarding outcomes related to internalizing problems, self-concept, and self-competence. However, there was significant variability in the outcome measures used to evaluate effects, as well as limitations regarding the study methods that impact the overall conclusions regarding the use of CCPT to treat children that have experienced traumatic events. Treatment recommendations and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Meany-Walen, K. K., & Kottman, T. (2019). Group Adlerian play therapy. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 28(1), 1-12. DOI:10.1037/pla0000079

Adlerian play therapy is identified as one of the most popular approaches to play therapy and has gained attention of researchers in the recent years. Group counseling is desirable in settings in which there is a scarcity of treatment providers trained in play therapy for the number of children in need of services, such as in schools. This article includes a brief explanation of Adlerian play therapy and group play therapy, a description of Group Adlerian play therapy concepts and skills, as well as a case example. Readers will find theoretical and practical applications of Group Adlerian play therapy for their clinical practice and research.

Alhwayan, O., & Mahamid, F. (2019). [The effectiveness of a counselling program based on play in reducing sleep disorders in children of sexual abuse](#). *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 10(3), 292–310.

This study aimed to test the effectiveness of a counseling program based on play in reducing sleep disorders in children of sexual abuse. The participants were 3 male and 3 female children who were sexually abused and registered at Al Hussein Social Foundation of the Ministry of Social Development in Amman, Jordan. They participated in a play-based group counseling program for 15 sessions. The results indicated the effectiveness of the counseling programs in decreasing sleep disorder symptoms in these children. Based on the results, the study recommends using similar methods for other counseling patients who suffer from sleep disorders, such as traumatized children, juvenile delinquents, and children with chronic and intractable diseases, and constructing counseling programs to reduce sleep disorders based on other therapeutic approaches such as drama, narrative therapy and emotion-centered theory.

Pester, D., Lenz, A. S., & Dell'Aquila, J. (2019). [Meta-analysis of single-case evaluations of child-centered play therapy for treating mental health symptoms](#). *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 28(3), 144-156. DOI:10.1037/pla0000098

As the demand for childhood mental health intervention rises, there is a need for increased evidentiary support for developmentally sensitive approaches that address childhood mental



health symptoms. Child-centered play therapy (CCPT) has been recognized as one of the most frequently used approaches for this population due to its responsiveness to cognitive and psychosocial developmental levels. A meta-analysis was conducted to evaluate the degree of effectiveness of CCPT for decreasing common childhood mental health symptoms based on single-case research design (SCRD) data. The systematic search strategy yielded 11 CCPT SCRD studies with 65 total effect sizes that were analyzed to determine omnibus treatment effect. Results indicated CCPT had a moderate effect for decreasing internalizing symptoms, externalizing symptoms, and social skill deficits. This study adds to the evidence base for CCPT incorporating SCRD data into the corpus of CCPT meta-analytic data and provides further support that CCPT should be considered an appropriate intervention to address common childhood mental health symptoms. Based on these results, the authors provide implications for CCPT practitioners and for future directions to build the intervention's evidence base.

Post, P. B., Phipps, C. B., Camp, A. C., & Grybush, A. L. (2019). Effectiveness of child centered play therapy among marginalized children. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 28(2), 88-97. DOI:10.1037/pla0000096

Marginalized children are often excluded from mainstream social, economic, cultural, and political life because of ethnicity or poverty. These children are more likely to have behavior problems that place them at risk later in life. The impact is evident at an early age. The purpose of this article was to review the literature that examined the impact of child-centered play therapy (CCPT) conducted with marginalized children. The literature was reviewed with regard to the results of the studies, the outcome variables used, the identification of who completed the assessments about the children, and the ethnicity of the play therapists who conducted the interventions. The findings demonstrated that CCPT is effective for marginalized children, externalized behaviors are most frequently assessed, teachers most frequently completed the assessments about the children, and the ethnicity of the play therapists is not usually reported. The results are considered in terms of implications for play therapists and future research.

Woodhouse, T. (2019). Play therapy with children affected by sexual abuse. In P. Ayling, H. Armstrong, & L. G. Clark (Eds.), *Becoming and being a play therapist: Play therapy in practice* (pp. 189-202). Routledge. DOI:10.4324/9780203711224

Yee, T., Ceballos, P., & Swan, A. (2019). Examining the trends of play therapy articles: A 10-year content analysis. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 28(4), 250-260. DOI:10.1037/pla0000103

The field of play therapy is rapidly growing and has been recognized as an evidence-based practice. As the field continues to grow, there is an increasing need to examine publication trends in this field to better understand areas of strengths and potential for improvements. To accomplish this goal, we conducted a content analysis of play therapy articles that were published within the years 2008–2017. Publication trends revealed seven themes that all articles fell under, with the theory/approach theme having the most articles (44.6%). There were mixed results between research and non research articles with some topics having more research articles and other topics having more non research articles. Unfortunately, all topics severely lacked articles with a multicultural focus. Implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Courtney, J. A., & Siu, A. F. (2018). Practitioner experiences of touch in working with children in play therapy. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 27(2), 92-102. DOI:10.1037/pla0000064

Issues related to touch in play therapy has rarely been researched or addressed within the literature. An original touch questionnaire instrument was created for this research—and first pilot tested—to capture practitioners' professional and clinical attitudes related to touch within child play therapy sessions. The data was analyzed based on the responses from the 246 practitioners who completed the survey in full. This exploratory research examined practitioner attitudes related to varied types of touch (e.g., shaking hands, hugging, holding) in working with children and teenagers in play therapy sessions. Additional findings are presented to include practitioners' concerns of liability about touch, their knowledge related to professional code of ethics, experiences of training in touch and child restraint, and policy practices such as an informed consent addressing issues of touch within therapy sessions.

The outcomes underscored the need for practitioners to develop clinical and ethical competencies in touch with recommendations toward curriculums in university graduate programs, and in continuing education trainings including mandatory supervisory seminars.

Guest, J. D., & Ohrt, J. H. (2018). Utilizing child-centered play therapy with children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and endured trauma: A case example. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 27(3), 157-165. DOI:10.1037/pla0000074

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a prevalent childhood disorder as 1 in 68 children, 8 years old and younger, are diagnosed with ASD. Additionally, childhood trauma impacts 60% of children living in the United States. Due to the lack of social awareness and increased sensitivity to various stimuli, children diagnosed with ASD are often more prone to victimization. Current treatment interventions for ASD are limited in flexibility and adaptive qualities. Flexibility is especially important for this population; therefore, a more responsive and open therapeutic approach is needed. A case study is presented illustrating an adapted child-centered play therapy approach for children on the spectrum who have also endured trauma.

Meany-Walen, K. K., Cobie-Nuss, A., Eittreim, E., Teeling, S., Wilson, S., & Xander, C. (2018). Play therapists' perceptions of wellness and self-care practices. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 27(3), 176-186. DOI:10.1037/pla0000067

The importance of professional helpers' wellness and self-care has received significant attention in the past decade and is even considered an ethical obligation by many organizations for professional helpers. Play therapists, compared with providers of other treatment modalities, might be more susceptible to professional and personal impairment because they bear witness to children's experiences through the process of play therapy, which can illicit strong emotional reactions from the client and from the therapist. They may also be at a heightened risk because of their nature to want to protect and nurture children. Yet no published accounts of research were found to elaborate specifically on play therapists' wellness attitudes and experiences. We surveyed Registered Play Therapists and Registered Play Therapist Supervisors about their perceptions, practices, and suggestions for wellness

and self-care. Results provide preliminary and exploratory data, implications for play therapists and supervisors, and suggestions for more research on this topic.

Patterson, L., Stutey, D. M., & Dorsey, B. (2018). Play therapy with African American children exposed to adverse childhood experiences. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 27(4), 215-226. DOI:10.1037/pla0000080

African American children living in poverty often experience adverse childhood conditions such as overexposure to violence, either witnessing domestic violence or community violence, or direct victimization. These conditions can cause an increase in future mental health problems. In this pilot study, 12 African American children ages 5–9 participated in six weeks of child-centered individual play therapy followed by six weeks of group play therapy. Individual and group play therapy addressed the participants’ problematic behaviors as reported by teachers at an afterschool program for disadvantaged youth. Findings indicated that a combination of individual and group child-centered play therapy significantly decreased problematic behaviors affecting academic performance and the classroom overall. The combination of individual and group interventions also demonstrated a significant decrease in general worry and negative intrusive thought patterns. The results support therapists utilizing individual and group child-centered play therapy when working with children who experience adverse childhood experiences. Further research is needed to understand the impact of child-centered play therapy as a preventative intervention for children at-risk for developing mental health problems.

Perryman, K. L., & Bowers, L. (2018). Turning the focus to behavioral, emotional, and social well-being: The impact of child-centered play therapy. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 27(4), 227-241. DOI:10.1037/pla0000078

This study evaluated the impact of participating in child-centered play therapy for qualifying diverse second-grade students, implemented through the Primary Mental Health Project treatment protocol. This preventative approach focuses on the behavioral, emotional, and social skills of children through child-centered play therapy. Second-grade students at 1 elementary school were assessed by their teachers for 4 types of behaviors: task orientation,

behavior control, assertiveness, and peer/social skills. Results demonstrated significant improvement in all 4 areas assessed for students who qualified for and received services over the course of 1 academic year. Findings suggest that child-centered play therapy is an effective preventative approach for students who are at risk for developing adverse behaviors that could negatively impact their academic success. Implications and the importance of providing preventative intervention for at-risk children are discussed.

Stutey, D. M., Klein, D. E., Wubbolding, R. E., & Dunnigan, N. (2018). Therapists' perceptions of the reality play therapy model. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 28(2), 69-78. DOI:10.1037/pla0000092

Recently a 6-week reality play therapy (RePT) model was developed for use with clients ages 7–14. RePT utilizes directive activities by integrating play and reality therapy techniques. In this study, we provided a 2-hr training on the RePT model with 24 participants in the mental health profession. At the end of the training, participants shared their perceptions of the RePT model, rated their confidence in utilizing activities from RePT, and rated the likelihood that they would utilize these interventions with child and young adolescent clients. Overall, participants reported confidence in utilizing most aspects of the RePT model and were more likely to implement the RePT activities that they felt most confident about after the training. Based on participants' feedback, suggestions for revising and expanding the RePT model are provided, along with suggestions for future research with the RePT model. (PsycINFO Database Record © 2019 APA, all rights reserved)

Steen, R. L. (Ed.). (2017). *Emerging research in play Therapy, child counseling, and consultation*. IGI Global.

Practitioners, researchers, and educators in play therapy, counseling and psychology write about emerging research in play therapy, child counseling, and consultation for the benefit of play therapists, play therapy educators, students, and mental health providers of children and families. Among the topics are the impact of trauma on brain development: a neuro-developmentally appropriate model for play therapists, a cognitive-behavioral play therapy

approach for adolescents' pro-social skill development in the school setting, toy guns in play therapy: an examination of play therapists' belief, consultation strategies for working with professionals supporting foster families, and the play therapist in the courtroom: preparing and preparing a client for court.

Stutey, D. M., Dunn, M., Shelnut, J., & Ryan, J. B. (2017). Impact of Adlerian play therapy on externalizing behaviors of at-risk preschoolers. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 26(4), 196-206. DOI:10.1037/pla0000055

African American children experience higher rates of poverty than other children. According to the National Center for Children in Poverty (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2014), not only does poverty contribute to children's poor physical and mental health, it can also impede their learning abilities and contribute to problems socially, emotionally, and behaviorally. In this single-case design study, 4 at-risk African American preschool children ages 3–5 participated in 7 weeks of Adlerian individual play therapy followed by 7 weeks of Adlerian group play therapy. This intervention was chosen to address the participants' problematic classroom behaviors, i.e., “calling out” and maintaining boundaries. Findings showed that upon completion of 7 weeks of individual Adlerian play therapy, children demonstrated questionable to moderate effect-size (ES) gains in reducing disruptive classroom behaviors. After receiving an additional 7 weeks of the Adlerian group play therapy, children demonstrated moderate to high ES improvements. Implications for play therapists working with African American preschool children living in poverty, interventions for addressing externalizing behaviors, and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Drewes, A. A., & Schaefer, C. E. (Eds.). (2016). *Play therapy in middle childhood*. American Psychological Association. DOI:10.1037/14776-000

Children ages 6–12 undergo major developmental changes. During this period, known as middle childhood, they develop a more advanced sense of self, emotion regulation skills, and self-confidence. They become less dependent on their parents and learn to form connections

with peers. They also learn to follow rules and reach achievements through sustained effort. Because of these social, emotional, and cognitive developments, play therapy with these children looks different than with younger children. This book helps therapists provide developmentally appropriate, effective play therapy for children in middle childhood. It presents a broad range of play interventions, showing how play therapy can be used with school-age children and their parents to address internalizing disorders, externalizing disorders, relational deficits, and autism spectrum disorder. For each intervention presented, the authors explain the theory and research supporting it and provide an illustrative case example. Readers will learn to choose treatment goals and strategies that are informed by the child's developmental needs. (PsycINFO Database Record © 2016 APA, all rights reserved)

Gil, E. M. (2016). Using integrated directive and nondirective play interventions for abused and traumatized children. In L. A. Reddy, T. M. Files-Hall, & C. E. Schaefer (Eds.), *Empirically based play interventions for children* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 95-113). American Psychological Association. DOI:10.1037/14730-006

Traditionally, when people think of play therapy, they tend to think of child-centered (or nondirective) play therapy. This default setting anchored in psychoanalytic tradition was rightfully earned through a historical foundation set in the 1900s by Anna Freud and Melanie Klein (Schaefer, 1999). The development of play therapy theories has been well documented (O'Connor & Braverman, 1997, 2009), and contemporary play therapists enjoy an array of meaningful choices that guide their clinical work. The theories and approaches are so varied that when people say they are “trained in play therapy,” it is prudent to explore what theoretical framework guides their work. Charles Schaefer, one of the pioneers in play therapy theory and education, used the term prescriptive in reference to a tailored play therapy approach that fits the intervention to clients’ unique needs. Schaefer (2001) stated that the prescriptive approach “espouses as its core premise the “differential therapeutics” concept (Frances, Clarkin, & Perry, 1984), which holds that some play interventions are more effective than others for certain disorders and that a client who does poorly with one type of play therapy may do well with another” (Beutler, 1979). (p. 58) Therefore, the prescriptive therapist explores the research literature for evidence-based treatments that have outcome data showing effectiveness for target problems. Integrated play therapists tailor their

approach to clients by drawing on a wealth of supportive evidence- and practice-based literature (Bratton, Ray, Rhine, & Jones, 2005; Christophersen & Mortweet, 2001; Reddy, Files-Hall, & Schaefer, 2005), and are not limited to a single treatment approach. Abused and traumatized children, in particular, are in need of integrated treatment because trauma affects a multitude of facets of development and functioning, and children can present with varied symptomology, depending on the type of trauma and the individual child.

Gonzalez, C. L., & Bell, H. (2016). Child-centered play therapy for Hispanic children with traumatic grief: Cultural implications for treatment outcomes. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 25(3), 146-153. DOI:10.1037/pla0000023

Numerous factors place Hispanic children at a greater risk of experiencing a traumatic event within their lifetime. Children may experience traumatic grief when trauma symptoms interfere with their ability to grieve the loss of a loved one. Child-centered play therapy (CCPT) is appropriate to use with culturally diverse clients and with children experiencing trauma and grief. This article provides an overview of childhood traumatic grief and the grief process in Hispanic culture. A case vignette illustrates the use of CCPT with a Hispanic female who experiences traumatic grief.

Hong, R., & Mason, C. M. (2016). Becoming a neurobiologically-informed play therapist. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 25(1), 35-44. DOI:10.1037/pla0000020

More information about the human brain is available than at any other point in history. Although most practitioners understand basic concepts about the brain and are familiar with terms such as *cortex* and *limbic system*, there remains a gap between awareness of these concepts and the application of them to clinical practice. In an era in which accountability is emphasized and evidence-based-practice is a requirement in many settings, it is essential that play therapists take advantage of an understanding of neurobiology to inform and justify clinical decision-making.



Kestly, T. A. (2016). Presence and play: Why mindfulness matters. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 25(1), 14-23. DOI:10.1037/pla0000019

Drawing from current neuroscience research and theory, the author of this article proposes a model of play therapy that integrates the emotional brain system of play (Panksepp 2009), polyvagal play in the autonomic nervous system (Porges, 2011), and resonant therapeutic relationships (Fredrickson, 2009). This integration provides a scientifically grounded explanation for the effects of play therapy relationships on the development of self-regulation, resilience, and healing. This model addresses arguments of whether or not a particular technique or modality is effective by asserting that collaboration with the underlying structure and function of the mind and brain, especially in the presence of positive emotional relationships, is essential for positive play therapy outcomes. In the presence of mindful practitioners, the use of face-to-face interactions during play makes it possible to navigate high- and low-arousal positive states in the nervous system because the play system is activated in the absence of danger, allowing it to co-opt high-arousal states of mobilization in the sympathetic branch of the nervous system (i.e., fight, flight, freeze), as well as low-arousal states in the dorsal vagal branch. Although sympathetic fight/flight/freeze behaviors are usually considered negative because they narrow the range of behavioral responses to challenging situations, in the case of play co-opting this branch, active play positively builds resilience by broadening possible behaviors and by providing a context in which we can learn to manage high-arousal states. This model suggests that the converse is true for low-arousal states and the part of the dorsal vagal branch of the nervous system that is usually associated with states of collapse and immobilization.

Slade, M. K., & Warme, R. T. (2016). [A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy and play therapy for child victims of abuse.](#) *Journal of Young Investigators*, 30(6), 36-43.

Because of their widespread use, trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy (TF-CBT) and play therapy (PT) were selected as treatments to be included in a meta-analytic study examining their effectiveness in aiding victims of child abuse. Studies analyzing the effectiveness of TF-CBT or PT were found using Academic Search Premier,

PsycARTICLES, Psychological and Behavioral Sciences Collection, PsychINFO, Google Scholar, and Digital Dissertation. Ten studies (N = 762) were combined into two separate meta-analyses, one for TF-CBT and one for PT. These were coded, and four general outcome categories were identified: externalizing, internalizing, sexual, and parent report.

Brady, M. C. (2015). [Cultural considerations in play therapy with Aboriginal children in Canada](#). *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 10(2), 95-109.  
DOI:10.7202/1077264ar

Aboriginal youth in Canada need mental health services that address culture as an integral component of treatment. Suffering and oppression caused by colonialism have led to collective distress among Aboriginal peoples and continue to impede the health and wellness of children. Counsellors have an ethical responsibility to recognize culture as an important construct that may influence a client's healing and treatment preferences. Play therapy is a promising therapeutic approach that allows counsellors to utilize developmentally appropriate theoretical orientations and methods in treatment; however, current literature fails to provide adequate direction and guidelines for culturally competent practice. Counsellors can assume an active role in ensuring that all components of counselling are conducted in a culturally sensitive manner. More research is needed in this area, but this article explores cultural considerations that could be relevant to a child and family accessing play therapy services.

Stewart, A. L., Field, T. A., & Echterling, L. G. (2016). Neuroscience and the magic of play therapy. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 25(1), 4-13.  
DOI:10.1037/pla0000016

Neuroscience research has provided support for the potential of play therapy to create new neural pathways. Recent studies also have identified the impact of mirror neurons and oxytocin on the therapeutic relationship. Using the metaphor of magic, we discuss how magicians take advantage of these neurological processes to trick audiences and contrast how play therapists use similar dynamics to enhance neuroplasticity. Whereas magicians rely on techniques that narrow or misdirect attention to create their illusions, the magic of play

therapy is a powerful and developmentally appropriate method of directing attention to the child's environment, expanding awareness and transforming children and adolescents.

Donald, E. J., Culbreth, J. R., & Carter, A. W. (2015). Play therapy supervision: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 24(2), 59-77.  
DOI:10.1037/a0039104

Play therapy continues to be a growing field (Association for Play Therapy, 2013a), suggesting that there will be an ongoing and increasing need for professional supervision that is effective and meets the needs of novice play therapists. To date there is very little research in the field of play therapy supervision, and much of the existing literature is conceptual. This review of the literature in play therapy supervision summarizes what is currently known and recommended by professionals in the field of play therapy supervision and provides a critical look at the existing literature as a way of identifying the starting point for more research in this area. Recommendations for research needed to advance knowledge of play therapy supervision are provided.

Crenshaw, D. A., & Stewart, A. L. (Eds.). (2015). *Play therapy: A comprehensive guide to theory and practice*. The Guilford Press.

This authoritative work brings together leading play therapists to describe state-of-the-art clinical approaches and applications. The book explains major theoretical frameworks and summarizes the contemporary play therapy research base, including compelling findings from neuroscience. Contributors present effective strategies for treating children struggling with such problems as trauma, maltreatment, attachment difficulties, bullying, rage, grief, and autism spectrum disorder. Practice principles are brought to life in vivid case illustrations throughout the volume. Special topics include treatment of military families and play therapy interventions for adolescents and adults.

Green, E. J., & Myrick, A. C. (2014). [Treating complex trauma in adolescents: A phase based, integrative approach for play therapists](#). *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 23(3), 131-145. DOI:10.1037/a0036679

Understanding the unique effects of complex trauma on adolescents, as well as identifying effective mental health treatment protocols, are critical for trauma-informed play therapists to practice competently. Recently in the literature, phase-based treatment has been one such protocol applied successfully to adolescents who experienced complex trauma (Cohen, Mannarino, & Deblinger, 2006). Furthermore, play-based approaches (integrating complex-trauma concepts, play, and empirically designed treatment protocols) have been asserted as a potentially beneficial paradigm (Drewes, 2011; Green, 2012). Therefore, the authors of this article present an original model—one that is integrative, play-based, and delineated in 3 phases—while remaining sensitive to the most current clinical implications in the trauma treatment outcome literature.

Jordan, B., Perryman, K., & Anderson, L. (2013). A case for child-centered play therapy with natural disaster and catastrophic event survivors. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 22(4), 219-230. DOI:10.1037/a0034637

This article reviewed the literature regarding the use of child-centered play therapy with children who have experienced natural disasters and catastrophic events over the last 11 years. The frequency of natural disasters has increased over the last decade. Tsunamis, tornadoes, earthquakes, and hurricanes have ravaged towns, cities, and countries, leaving thousands dead. Beyond the physical injuries suffered, the survivors of these catastrophes, many of them children, often suffer emotional devastation, and profound losses of routines, friends and family, and a sense of security. Child-centered play therapy empowers children as they lead the play session with a trained adult, assisting them on their journey. This therapy modality allows the child to be in control, which is paramount for those having experienced natural disasters where they were completely helpless. The child may then begin to heal as they make sense of their trauma through their natural language of play. This article provides literature review supporting a case for child-centered play therapy for children experiencing natural disasters as well as recommendations for future research in this area. (PsycINFO Database Record © 2016 APA, all rights reserved)

Misurell, J. R., & Springer, C. (2013). Developing culturally responsive evidence-based practice: A game-based group therapy program for child sexual abuse (CSA). *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 22(1), 137-149. DOI:10.1007/s10826-011-9560-2

The American Psychological Association has called for the development and dissemination of evidence-based practices (EBPs) that are culturally responsive to ethnically and socioeconomically diverse groups. Delivering culturally responsive EBPs is essential for mental health practitioners working within racially, culturally, and ethnically diverse settings and across a variety of disorders. Child sexual abuse (CSA) affects people from diverse backgrounds and results in a myriad of difficulties impacting children and families. Therefore, effective treatment for CSA must take cultural factors into consideration. The authors describe the culturally congruent elements of a Game-Based Cognitive-Behavioral Group Therapy (GB-CBT) model for CSA, which was developed within a center serving predominantly urban, economically disadvantaged, African-American and Latino families. Lessons learned from families served through the GB-CBT program are incorporated and illustrate the ongoing and dynamic process of improving cultural competence in clinical practice. Cultural and socioeconomic considerations and obstacles to treatment are discussed along with strategies and recommendations for delivering EBPs for CSA in a culturally informed manner.

Vicario, M., Tucker, C., Smith Adcock, S., & Hudgins-Mitchell, C. (2013). Relational cultural play therapy: Reestablishing healthy connections with children exposed to trauma in relationships. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 22(2), 103-117. DOI:10.1037/a0032313

Children who have experienced trauma in relationships, such as direct physical or sexual abuse, or who have witnessed crimes or domestic violence, often carry forward symptoms of traumatic stress. Children with posttraumatic stress may become withdrawn or aggressive, clingy or distant with caregivers, oversleep and overeat, or develop insomnia and eat too little (A. Banks, 2006, Relational therapy for trauma, *Journal of Psychological Trauma*, Vol. 5, pp. 25–47). These physical and psychological symptoms are further complicated when children have experienced trauma that disrupts their primary relationships. In this article, we

will discuss and illustrate a relational– cultural approach to play therapy designed to help children who have experienced trauma in relationships to reconnect to others in healthy and emotionally beneficial ways.

Springer, C., Misurell, J. R., & Hiller, A. (2012). Game-based cognitive behavioral therapy (gb-cbt) group program for children who have experienced sexual abuse: A three-month follow-up investigation. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 21(6), 646-664. DOI:10.1080/10538712.2012.722592

This study examined the efficacy of a game-based cognitive-behavioral group therapy program for addressing problems typically found among elementary school-aged victims of child sexual abuse immediately after treatment and at three months following treatment. It was hypothesized that positive gains would be observed among the following domains. (a) internalizing symptoms (e.g., anxiety, depression, and trauma); (b) externalizing behaviors (e.g., oppositional behavior, disobedience, and conduct disorder behavior); and (c) sexually inappropriate behaviors. Improved knowledge of abuse and personal safety skills was also predicted. Results indicated that game-based cognitive-behavioral group therapy resulted in improvements in internalizing symptoms, externalizing behavioral problems, total behavioral problems, and personal safety skills both immediately after treatment and at three-month follow-up.

Phillips, R. D. (2010). How firm is our foundation? Current play therapy research. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 19(1), 13-25. DOI:10.1037/a0017340

The present article examines play therapy research since Phillips's (1985) review. Play therapy's evidence base remains largely inadequate using specific scientific/methodological criteria. The most compelling evidence for play therapy's effectiveness is found for children facing medical procedures, although alternative explanations of the same data cannot be disconfirmed. The present conclusions are considered relative to findings from recent meta-analyses of play therapy research. Suggestions are made for improving play therapy research as well as broad questions to guide such research.

Ray, D. C., & Bratton, S. C. (2010). What the research shows about play therapy: Twenty first century update. In J. N. Baggerly, D. C. Ray and S. C. Bratton (Eds.), *Child-centered play therapy research: The evidence base for effective practice* (pp.1-33). John Wiley & Sons, Inc. DOI:10.1002/9781118269626.ch1

The field of mental health currently requires substantial evidence to support the use of interventions providing direct services to clients. Emphasis on evidentiary support of mental health interventions is not new. Over the last two decades, the field has observed the rise of the evidence-based movement of empirically supported treatments in which interventions are critiqued according to rigor of experimental research studies. Fortunately, play therapy research dates back more than 45 years, providing empirical support for even the harshest of critics. There are few interventions that can claim such a lengthy research history as well as a thriving body of current research. The authors published their first review of play therapy research literature in 2000 in a simple article titled, "What the Research Shows About Play Therapy." They reviewed 82 play therapy research studies in the article, from 1942 to 1999. The authors later published findings applying precise methodology of meta-analysis review to 93 criteria-based controlled play therapy studies (Bratton, Ray, Rhine, & Jones, 2005). This chapter summarizes their earlier findings on play therapy research for the last century and reviews recent research from the first decade of the new millennium.

Hill, A. (2009). Factors influencing the degree and pattern of parental involvement in play therapy for sexually abused children. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 18(4), 455-474. DOI:10.1080/10538710903035214

Although much has been written about the role of therapists in children's recovery from child sexual abuse, relatively little attention has been paid to the role of non-offending parents. This study investigated the work of a team of therapists who sometimes included such parents in therapy sessions with children. The study sought to understand what factors were influencing the degree and pattern of parental involvement and to understand what effect these patterns of parental involvement were having on the process and outcomes of therapy. The study successfully identified a range of factors influencing the patterns of parental involvement, but more research will be needed to understand the effect on outcomes.

Bowers, N. R. (2009). [A naturalistic study of the early relationship development process of nondirective play therapy](#). *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 18(3), 176-189.  
DOI:10.1037/a0015330

In this study, the naturalistic method of qualitative research (Y. Lincoln & E. Guba, 1985) was applied to the study of the early relationship development process (ERDP) of nondirective play therapy. The analyses of individual and focus group meetings with play therapists in Canada and Holland as well as from videotapes from the same settings resulted in the emergence of 6 themes: description, qualities, goals, therapeutic support, process, and indicators of growth. These themes, which are presented in the “voices of the participants,” together with the literature review, serve to enrich the description of ERDP. The data suggested that play provides an environment of safety, creativity, and privacy when careful preparation for therapy from outside supports such as family, caregivers, and school settings takes place. With this in place, the child is able to share his or her narrative, developing a sense of empowerment, a better sense of self-actualization, a language, and “a voice” all facilitated by the early relationship with the play therapist. In addition, new information emerged from the analyses of videotapes acquired from the same 2 settings, suggesting that there is a propensity for children to find “comfort” play when permitted to freely discover the play room.

Cattanach, A. (2008). *Play therapy with abused children* (2nd ed.). Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

This second edition of Ann Cattanach's highly commended book explores the use of play therapy with abused children as a way of helping them heal their distress and make sense of their experiences through expanding their own creativity in play. The book provides practical ways of starting play therapy with abused children and explains how the child can use this process for healing. Models of intervention are described with consideration given to the particular needs of the child and the work setting of the therapist. Suggestions include short and medium term interventions, individual/group and sibling work. This edition provides new case study material, up-to-date information on relevant legislation on children's rights and welfare and recent developments in research in the field. This book is essential reading



for professionals working with abused children, as well as those interested in the use of creative therapies.

Green, E. J. (2008). Re-envisioning Jungian Analytical Play Therapy with child sexual assault survivors. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 17(2), 102-121.  
DOI:10.1037/a0012770

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a pervasive, traumatic event (A. H. Heflin & E. Deblinger, 2007) affecting hundreds of thousands of ethnically and socioeconomically diverse children and families across the United States (F. W. Putnam, 2003). E. Gil (2006) and J. S. Shelby and E. D. Felix (2006) have noted that integrative therapies—those that combine directive and nondirective strategies—possess the capacity to benefit a child traumatized by sexual assault. Jungian analytical play therapy (JAPT) is a creative, integrative therapy that may be beneficial when applied to children affected by CSA (J. Allan, 1988). Within the safety of a nonjudgmental, therapeutic relationship, children affected by CSA may become consciously aware of and subsequently resolve conflicting emotions associated with sexual assault in symbolic, less-threatening ways. Through participation in JAPT, the child's psyche may begin the therapeutic process of integrating inner and outer emotional polarities in an archetypal quest for self-healing after sexual trauma.

Dougherty, J., & Ray, D.C. (2007). Differential impact of play therapy on developmental levels of children. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 16(1), 2-19.  
DOI:10.1037/1555-6824.16.1.2

The purpose of this preliminary study was to explore the impact of child-centered play therapy (CCPT) on children identified within J. Piaget's (1962) preoperational and concrete operations developmental stages. Using archival data, this study used a 3-wave repeated measures analysis of variance design to analyze the impact of CCPT on 24 children between the ages of 3 and 8 who received 19–23 individual CCPT sessions. On the basis of the child's age, children were evenly divided into 2 treatment groups of preoperational or operational developmental stage. A pretest, approximate midpoint, and posttest administration of the Parenting Stress Index (R. Abidin, 1995) was collected for use in the analysis. Preliminary

results of this study revealed statistically significant differences in the impact of CCPT for children of different developmental stages.

Webb, N. B. (Ed.). (2007). *Play therapy with children in crisis: Individual, group, and family treatment* (3rd ed.). The Guilford Press.

How does living through a crisis affect a child's inner world, behavior, and relationships? What can practitioners do to help children cope with extreme stress and build needed skills for the future? Now in a completely revised and updated third edition, this widely adopted text demonstrates effective play therapy approaches for children struggling with a range of crises in the family, school, and community. More than an update, the third edition has been extensively rewritten with the latest knowledge on crisis intervention, trauma, and short-term play therapy, and 17 of the 21 chapters are entirely new. Accessible, timely, and practical, this is an essential resource for practitioners and students alike. The volume retains the focus on in-depth case studies that made prior editions so popular, providing step-by-step descriptions of individual, group, and family play interventions. Case material is presented in a two-column format that gives the reader not only the content of the therapy sessions, but also the clinicians accompanying thoughts and decision-making processes. Expert contributors explore issues involved in working with children who have experienced such stressful events as parental death or divorce, abuse and neglect, violence in the school or community, and mass trauma. Important new topics include the crisis of parental military deployment, the impact of natural disasters on families, immigration-related trauma, terrorism, and disrupted adoption. Ways to involve parents and caregivers in treatment are discussed, as are strategies for preventing the secondary traumatization of therapists. Throughout, discussion questions and exercises deepen the reader's learning. The Appendix features useful information about play therapy resources and training. Facilitating directed, strengths-based intervention with vulnerable children and families, this book offers indispensable insights and tools for practicing social workers, child and school psychologists, play and art therapists, counselors, family therapists, and psychiatrists. It will serve as a core text in graduate-level courses.

Hill, A. (2006). Play therapy with sexually abused children: Including parents in therapeutic play. *Child and Family Social Work, 11*(4), 316–324.  
DOI:10.1111/j.1365-2206.2006.00411.x

This paper draws on the author's experience as a member of a team of social workers undertaking play therapy with sexually abused children. It outlines the theoretical rationale that informed the development of practice in which parents were included in therapeutic play sessions with their children. It goes on to examine two cases that illustrate some of the issues. Finally, this paper begins to develop a critique of practice that involves parents, highlighting potential limitations and proposing a series of questions for further research.

Bratton, S. C., Ray, D., Rhine, T., & Jones, L. (2005). The efficacy of play therapy with children: A Meta-Analytic review of treatment outcomes. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 36*(4), 376–90. DOI:10.1037/0735-7028.36.4.376

The efficacy of psychological interventions for children has long been debated among mental health professionals; however, only recently has this issue received national attention, with the U.S. Public Health Service (2000) emphasizing the critical need for early intervention and empirically validated treatments tailored to children's maturational needs. Play therapy is a developmentally responsive intervention widely used by child therapists but often criticized for lacking an adequate research base to support its growing practice. A meta-analysis of 93 controlled outcome studies (published 1953–2000) was conducted to assess the overall efficacy of play therapy and to determine factors that might impact its effectiveness. The overall treatment effect for play therapy interventions was 0.80 standard deviations. Further analysis revealed that effects were more positive for humanistic than for nonhumanistic treatments and that using parents in play therapy produced the largest effects. Play therapy appeared equally effective across age, gender, and presenting issue.

LeVay, D. (2005). "Little monsters"? Play therapy for children with sexually problematic behavior. In C. Schaefer, J. McCormick, & A. Ohnogi (Eds.), *International handbook of play therapy: Advances in assessment, theory, research, and practice*. (pp. 243-262). Jason Aronson.

The author aims to explore in this chapter some of the processes that cause young children to display problematic sexual behavior and the connections this behavior has with their own experiences of trauma and abuse. He then looks at how play therapy can provide an effective treatment intervention in enabling children to begin to manage the very complex emotional and psychological processes that underpin this behavior and that could, without early therapeutic support, develop into the entrenched, compulsive behavioral patterns and dominant internal narratives that may ultimately provide a pathway into adult sexual offending. The question of terminology and of how to describe this group of children has been much debated. They have variously been described as young abusers, children who molest or who are sexually aggressive. While the sexual behavior in question is clearly abusive and in turn is damaging and traumatic for the victims of such behavior, the author feels it is important to make a distinction between the sexualized behavior of young children and that of older adolescents. Throughout the chapter the author presents examples of case material from children and young people that he has worked with. In all cases names and circumstantial details have been changed in order to prevent identification.

Reddy, L. A., Files-Hall, T. M., & Schaefer, C. E. (Eds.). (2005). *Empirically based play interventions for children*. American Psychological Association.  
DOI:10.1037/11086-000

For more than 60 years, play therapy has been seen as the oldest and most popular form of child therapy in clinical practice. However, many have criticized the lack of thorough research on play intervention. In this age of cost-containment and managed behavioral health care, the need for empirical evidence on the effectiveness of play therapies is increasingly important to mental health professionals, insurers, and consumers. This book's aim is to acquaint clinicians with evidence-based and "maximally useful" play therapies for a variety of children in different settings. The literature on empirically based therapy is divided into four parts: play prevention programs, play interventions for internalizing disorders, play

interventions for externalizing disorders, and play therapies for developmental disorders and related issues. Chapters 3 and 5 are particularly useful for those treating children with physical and sexual abuse issues. Chapter 13 gives an overview of current empirically based play therapies and suggests future directions for research and training.

Ryan, V. (2004). Adapting non-directive play therapy for children with attachment disorders. *Clinical Child Psychology & Psychiatry*, 9(1), 75-87.  
DOI:10.1177/1359104504039174

Brief, intensive, non-directive play therapy with a looked-after child in transition who had serious attachment problems is discussed in this article. As a background to deriving practice suggestions from this difficult and largely unsuccessful intervention, the play therapy literature on maltreated children is presented. Heard and Lake's extension of attachment theory, 'the dynamics of attachment and interest sharing,' is then used to analyze and understand the complexities of the intra- and interpersonal relationships within this intervention from the child's, carers', social worker's and therapist's viewpoints. Finally, practice suggestions are made, namely, that: (i) in complex cases for shorter term work, consultations based on Heard and Lake's theory, rather than direct work by the therapist, should be considered; and (ii) a combination of filial therapy and the use of Heard and Lake's theory can provide both the depth of understanding needed by professionals and the development of appropriate adult-child attachment relationships in longer term work.

Snow, M. S., Helm, H. M., & Martin, E. E. (2004). Play therapy as court testimony: A case study. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 13(2), 75-97. DOI:10.1037/h0088891

Though there is little literature supporting the use of videotaped play therapy sessions as court testimonials, this article opens the door for further discussion of the use of these sessions in courtroom situations. Specifically, this article presents a case study, which includes original court transcripts of the therapist's testimony and a transcript of the videotaped play therapy session. This videotape was not used as proof of child abuse, but instead was used to allow the jury to see the child's expression of his experience. The impact

of the child's experience is revealed to the jury without subjecting him to the trauma of facing his perpetrator(s) and a courtroom of adults. The intent of this article is to present one way in which play therapists can use their work with children in legal settings, which allows the testimony of the child's experience of trauma through play therapy themes.

Knell, S. M., & Ruma, C. D. (2003). Play therapy with a sexually abused child. In M. A. Reinecke, & F. M. Dattillio (Eds.), *Cognitive therapy with children and adolescents: A casebook for clinical practice* (2nd ed., pp. 338-368). Guilford Press.

While there is some controversy concerning the use of cognitive therapy combined with play therapy in treating young children, Knell believes that with minor changes cognitive therapy can be applied to youngsters. With adults, it is the belief that cognitive-behavioral therapy can be effective because adults have the cognitive capacity to know which of their thoughts are rational or irrational. However, what may seem irrational to adults may seem sensible to children. Play is one means of using cognitive therapy with children, Knell believes. It is important, she says, that the therapist is aware of child development issues and adapts those therapeutic techniques as needed. Bibliotherapy, drawings, other art media, and puppet and doll play are some of the most important techniques in cognitive-behavioral play therapy. Self-created picture books - collections of the youngsters' own drawings - may help in disclosing personal histories of abuse. Knell and Ruma present the story of a 5-year-old girl as a case example. Using plenty of subheadings, the child's back-ground information, initial assessment, and the 13 therapy sessions are clearly broken down. The authors present copies of eight of the girl's drawings with her own explanations of what happened.

Scott, T. A., Burlingame, G., Starling, M., Porter, C., & Lilly, J. P. (2003). Effects of individual client-centered play therapy on sexually abused children's mood, self-concept, and social competence. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 12(1), 7-30. DOI:10.1037/h0088869

The purpose of this study was to ascertain effects of individual client-centered play therapy on sexually abused children's mood, self-concept, and social competence. A weekly client-

centered play protocol was utilized with 26 cases of 3- to 9-year-old sexually abused children for approximately 10 sessions. All 26 subjects and parents completed an assessment battery before and immediately after treatment, and 24 cases completed a two-month follow-up battery. Overall, findings indicate mixed support for the efficacy of play therapy. Although there was initial support for improvement in the children's' perceptions of competency, other group comparison results indicated no statistical significance. Utilizing the Reliable Change Index formula, eight children clinically improved, four deteriorated, four improved and later deteriorated, and eight cases indicated no significant change. Additional qualitative severity comparisons, research limitations, and a discussion of the impact on current practice follow.

Veltman, M. W. M., & Browne, K. D. (2003). Trained raters' evaluation of Kinetic Family Drawings of physically abused children. *The Arts in Psychotherapy, 30*(1), 3-12.  
DOI:10.1016/S0197-4556(02)00230-7

This study compared the way abused children drew themselves and their family to drawings from two groups of matched controls using the Kinetic Family Drawing (KFD) Inventory (Peterson and Hardin, 1995, 1997). The researchers hypothesized that the drawings by abused children would exhibit significantly more indicators of emotional distress than the drawings of the non-abused children. Six physically abused children (aged 4-8 yrs) and 12 matched control children participated in the study. The researchers found significant differences among the children. However, the significant differences almost disappeared within 6 months, and completely disappeared by 12 months. The authors concluded, therefore, that a more comprehensive study would be required to evaluate the significance of the KFD technique with abused children.

Benedict, H. E., & Hastings, L. (2002). Object-relations play therapy. In F. W. Kaslow & J. J. Magnavita (Eds.), *Comprehensive handbook of psychotherapy: Psychodynamic/object relations* (Vol. 1, pp. 47-80). John Wiley & Sons.

With almost six pages of tables describing childhood patterns of development, major play themes, and therapeutic goals and techniques, this chapter presents an extensive overview of object-relations play therapy. The authors give a brief history of object relations. They name

the two fundamental assumptions behind object-relations theories and methods of assessment and intervention. Object-relations play therapy is the preferred treatment for youngsters who have suffered chronic trauma in the parent-child relationship or with significant others. Often such children have suffered abandonment of some kind. Through object-relations play therapy, children can learn about boundaries and how to have more faith in caregivers. They can develop better strategies for interpersonal relations and coping with frustration and stress. Two case examples are presented, one being a 10-year-old girl who had been sexually abused in infancy and the other a 4-year-old girl abandoned first by her mother then by two other parent figures. While no controlled empirical studies had been completed by the time this book was published, object-relations play therapy has been used numerous times in treatment lasting between six months and two to three years.

Gil, E. (2002). Play therapy with abused children. In F. W. Kaslow, R. F. Massey, & S. D. Massey (Eds.), *Comprehensive handbook of psychotherapy: Interpersonal/humanistic/existential* (Vol. 3, pp.59-82). John Wiley & Sons.

Using her own previously published research and summarizing the work of other experts, prominent play therapist Eliana Gil states that play therapy has come into its own in the last 20 years. The Association for Play Therapy was begun in 1982. A certification process was started 10 years later. As of 2002, there were 367 Registered Play Therapists and 474 Registered Play Therapist Supervisors. The author traces the history of the field, names the six leading theories of play therapy, and describes the therapeutic aspects of play and present-day applications with a particular focus on play therapy with abused children. Only the cognitive-behavioral approach has been systemically studied with abused youngsters, but play therapy is considered helpful with sexually abused children because of the great need for secrecy these child victims often have. Gil gives a case example of an 8-year-old Central American girl who was referred to treatment by school officials. It was found that she had been physically and sexually abused by her teen-age brother. While the brother was banned from having any contact with his sister, he was treated leniently by the justice system. The assessment phase with the girl lasted two months. Directive therapy with her took five months. The final phase of her treatment was a referral to 12 weeks of group therapy. Gil



closes this chapter with the limitations of nondirective play therapy and an appeal for “hard research” on play therapy.

Jones, K. D. (2002). Group play therapy with sexually abused preschool children: Group behaviors and interventions. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 27(4), 377-389. DOI:10.1080/714860200

Group play therapy is a common treatment modality for children who have been sexually abused. Sexually abused preschoolers exhibit different group play therapy behaviors than do nonabused children. Group workers need to be aware of these differences and know the appropriate group interventions. This article describes group play therapy with sexually abused preschool children, how to establish a play therapy group for sexually abused preschoolers, common group play therapy behaviors observed among sexually abused preschoolers, and appropriate group therapy interventions.

Palmer, L., Farrar, A. R., & Ghahary, N. (2002). A biopsychosocial approach to play therapy with maltreated children. In F. W. Kaslow, R. Davis & S. D. Massey (Eds.), *Comprehensive handbook of psychotherapy: Interpersonal / humanistic / existential* (Vol. 3, pp. 109-130). John Wiley & Sons.

Erik Erikson’s theory of child development provides a comprehensive, prescriptive plan for intervention with abused youngsters, the authors state. The application of his theory is also a good candidate for scientific investigation in a field which lacks thorough research. Erikson’s theory encompasses the first four stages of child development which are basic trust versus basic mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, and industry versus inferiority. Posttraumatic play and typical child’s play are described in this chapter as is the vital role of attachment which is damaged by abusive behavior. The authors give a case example of a biracial, 8-year-old boy named Adam who had been physically and sexually abused and reared in multiple home settings. The boy was resistant at first to addressing the sexual abuse he had suffered and the sexually aggressive behavior he exhibited with younger children. As therapy continued, Adam began to describe the sib-ling abuse in his family. The first goal for him was the establishment of basic trust, a process which took the first two

years of therapy. Play therapy became the main way he showed his feelings. After assessing the themes of Adam's play, the therapist was able to guide the play therapy and introduce healthier means of solving problems, relating to others, and expressing his feelings. Adam was later placed successfully with an adoptive family.

Wilson, K., & Ryan, V. (2002). Play therapy with emotionally damaged adolescents. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, 7(3), 178-191.  
DOI:10.1080/13632750200507015

Adolescence is a critical period of development for all individuals, but particularly for those who have suffered earlier emotional difficulties or abuse. If these problems go unresolved, patterns of behaviour which become established during this period may be more difficult to change later on. However, more traditional talk therapies may be resisted by adolescents. This article argues that non-directive play therapy, given age-appropriate adaptations, offers an approach which, since it encompasses both play and verbal communication, is well suited to addressing adolescent concerns, particularly those of early adolescence. This argument is illustrated by two accounts of therapy with a boy and a girl, both in early adolescence, which show how a more traditional non-directive counseling approach was combined with play therapy by the adolescents themselves, allowing exploration of emotional difficulties on all levels of mental functioning. The cases show how traumatic or painful early memories may be reworked on a bodily and emotional level, without the feeling of over-intrusion risked by a directive or interpretive stance.

Douglass, L. (2001). Nobody hears: How assessment using art as well as play therapy can help children disclose past and present sexual abuse. In J. Murphy (Ed.), *Art therapy with young survivors of sexual abuse: Lost for words* (pp. 50-63). Routledge. DOI:10.4324/9780203360927

With referrals from Social Services, there is a need for speedy assessments of children who may be suffering sexual abuse within the family. Supporting evidence for possible court cases is difficult to gather. The author outlines the stages of a child protection plan in Appendix 1.1. Douglass presents two cases, one of which involved a family with three

adopted boys and the other involving a 3-year-old girl whose father was a sex of-fender. Douglass used art and play therapy with the boys and found each of the brothers was at risk of sexual abuse from one another. Planning protective action for the boys was difficult. After therapy with the girl, the author and her colleagues believed abuse had occurred. Legally, however, there wasn't enough evidence for a conviction.

Greenberg, T. (2001). Feeling flowers/healing garden. In J. G. Kaduson, & C. E. Schaefer (Eds.), *101 more favorite play therapy techniques* (pp.107-110). Jason Aronson.

The expressive arts therapy technique "feeling flowers/healing garden" can be used to enable children to correctly identify and appropriately express their feelings. When working with sexually abused children, this technique enables them to process and work through traumatic experiences. Expanding on the "Color Your Life" technique introduced by K. J. O'Connor (1983), it includes a creative and tactile component so often beneficial in working with survivors of abuse. There is also the opportunity for transformational work as the flowers/garden can be an ongoing creation reflecting progress over the course of treatment. Using play as a method to aid children in exploring and sharing their abuse experience, this technique helps to reduce anxiety, thereby making children more available to working through their trauma. In this technique, the therapist and child create flowers out of colored clay, with each color representing one of the child's feelings. At the end of a session, the child will have created a bouquet of flowers that represent his or her many feelings and that have aided him or her in identifying and appropriately expressing her feelings and thoughts about the abuse. With older children, the technique can be expanded to include the creation of an entire garden. (PsycINFO Database Record © 2004 APA, all rights reserved)

Landreth, G. L. (Ed.). (2001). *Innovations in play therapy: Issues, process, and special populations*. Routledge.

Landreth, founder and director of the internationally recognized Center for Play Therapy at the University of North Texas, describes play as an integral part of childhood that aids in the development of language and communication skills, emotional development, decision-

making skills, social skills, and cognitive development. Landreth lists the five stages in the play therapy process and describes the types of toys used. He names what he considers the essential personality characteristics of good play therapists and describes cultural factors in play therapy. Also addressed are pharmacology, legal issues, group and short-term therapy, and work with special populations such as traumatized youngsters in crisis and aggressive, acting out children. Two chapters discuss play therapy behaviors of physically and sexually abused children. A discussion about the traveling play therapist is one focus that sets this book apart from others. The main play patterns of physically abused youngsters include play that is unimaginative and literal and play that is repetitive and compulsive. Six play behaviors are often seen in such youngsters. These are developmental immaturity, self-deprecation and self-destructive ways, aggression, withdrawal and passivity, dissociation, and hypervigilance. Landreth says children who witness domestic violence may need help as much as those who are actually physically abused.

Ryan, V., & Needham C. (2001). Non-directive play therapy with children experiencing psychic trauma. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 6(3), 437-453.  
DOI:10.1177/1359104501006003011

This article describes the process of a brief non-directive play therapy intervention by a trainee therapist with a nine-year-old child who had developed persistent stress reactions to a single traumatic event. An overview of the place of brief non-directive play therapy in the treatment of children and their families for post-traumatic stress disorder is given. Themes in the child's therapy, and the therapist's and the parents' role are related to post-traumatic and attachment issues. Finally, implications for current therapeutic practice with traumatized children and their families are outlined.

Mook, B. (1999). Interpreting imaginative play in child psychotherapy: Towards a phenomenological hermeneutic approach. *Humanistic Psychologist* 27(2), 173-186.  
DOI:10.1080/08873267.1999.9986903

Notes that the theoretical basis of play theory remains weak, despite renewed interest and technical advances in this therapy with children. It is argued that phenomenological

hermeneutic approach to play therapy offers a philosophically grounded theoretical understanding of the meaning of children's expressions through imaginative play in a therapeutic context. Drawing upon H. G. Gadamer's ontological concept of play and P. Ricoeur's theory of interpretation, the author views a child's imaginative play as a text that calls for interpretation. The understanding and interpretation of imaginative play in play therapy is illustrated by means of a case vignette of a physically abused 6-yr-old male. The author suggests that interpretations within the playworld helped the child to work through his personal and relational problems in an imaginative way, and that new insights derived from play are in turn linked to the child's real life circumstances to foster integration, transformation, and healing. (PsycINFO Database Record © 2004 APA, all rights reserved)

Ryan, V. (1999). [Developmental delay, symbolic play and non-directive play therapy.](#)  
*Clinical Child Psychology & Psychiatry*, 4(2), 167-185.  
DOI:10.1177/1359104599004002004

This paper focuses on non-directive play therapy with maltreated and neglected young children, and explores ways in which their symbolic play seems to be activated and accelerated during play therapy. The frameworks of attachment and cognitive development are utilized to examine therapeutic relationships. Examples from normal development and from therapeutic work are given in order to describe more precisely the seemingly essential features in the development of symbolic play in young children. The important features of a child's social environment, physical environment and internal state which seem to contribute to the activation of symbolic play are then discussed in more detail. Finally, it is argued, studying a child's transition from concrete to symbolic play during play therapy contributes to our understanding not only of damaged and delayed children's development, but also provides additional information on normal children's development of this capacity.

Homeyer, L. E., & Landreth, G. L. (1998). [Play therapy behaviors of sexually abused children](#). *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 7(1), 49-71.  
DOI:10.1037/h0089418

Examined the question of whether there are specific play therapy behaviors associated with children who have been sexually abused, and whether these behaviors differ by sex and age of the children. A survey instrument was developed which listed 140 play therapy behaviors. 21 play therapists participated in a field test to establish external validity. 249 play therapists were also surveyed to identify professionals who provide play therapy. Analysis identified highly interrelated play therapy behaviors of sexually abused girls and boys from ages 3-10 yrs. Suggested use of the play therapy behaviors include assessments to detect sexual abuse and recommendations for child placement and/or court testimony.

Griffith, M. (1997). Empowering techniques of play therapy: A method for working with sexually abused children. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 19(2), 130-142.

A therapeutic model is presented in which the mental health counselor functions as a play therapist with children who have been sexually abused. Play therapy, as addressed in this article, is based on existential, client-centered, and developmental theories. The purpose of play therapy is to relieve the emotional distress of sexual abuse through a variety of expressive play materials and imagination and is based on the notion that play is a child's natural medium of self-expression. Through the power of the therapeutic relationship and the belief of the mental health counselor in the child's strengths and potential for change and growth, self-esteem and empowerment within the child increases.

Herman, L. (1997). [Good enough fairy tales for re-solving sexual abuse trauma](#). *Arts in Psychotherapy*, 24(5), 439-445. DOI:10.1016/S0197-4556(97)00030-0

In this case-study, a preschooler identifies covert sexual themes in the video versions of traditional children's video tales. The child used the tales in dramatic forms as a distancing technique to tell her therapist about the traumatic events of her past. By telling stories and creating dramas based on this material the child was able to find both an appropriate context

and a process to discuss her concerns with her therapist and learn new ways of relating to her abuse.

Johnston, S. S. M. (1997). The use of art and play therapy with victims of sexual abuse: A review of the literature. *Family Therapy*, 24(2), 101-113.

The dramatic increase in the incidence of sexual abuse over the last decade has prompted mental health professionals to develop improved services for treating sexually victimized children and adult survivors. A re-view of the literature reveals that art and play therapies are extremely effective in both assessing the existence of sexual abuse through diagnostic indicators, and accessing sexually abused clients through a direct, active, and emotionally laden medium of communication. The specific play therapy techniques reviewed are sand play, puppets, anatomical dolls, and therapeutic drawings. The impact of art therapy as evidence in the courtroom is also examined.

Zinni, V. R. (1997). Differential aspects of sand-play with 10- and 11-year-old children. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 21(7), 657-668. DOI:10.1016/S0145-2134(97)00025-2

Objective: The aim of this study was to determine whether or not differences existed between control and clinic children at one age group in terms of how they undertook a sandplay picture task. It was seen as important to determine whether or not these groups were indeed disparate in terms of amount of emotional stress or suffering. Methodology: An experimental comparison of the sandplay behavior and pictures of 10 and 11 year olds was conducted, with subjects equally distributed in two primary groups, clinic and control. Twenty-six clinic children (13 males and 13 females) were included, who had experienced primarily sexual, physical, and/or emotional abuse. Twenty-six control children (13 males and 13 females) were also included. All children came from the same metropolitan area. In order to validate the assumption that these two groups were distinct on the dimension of distress, the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist was administered. An interrater counting technique was used to evaluate photographs of the pictures and score for content and theme. Results: Results indicated that there were differences in the sandplay pictures of clinic and control

children in all three of the dependent variables; content, theme, and approach to the sandplay. Significant differences also existed between Achenbach groups. Most pronounced were the differences in approach to the sandplay, with clinic children, low competency and high problem children having difficulty staying within the boundary of the box, having more regressed play, and presenting more disorganized pictures. Conclusions: Sandplay pictures do differ between children who are experiencing emotional stress and those who are not. Sandplay may serve as a useful assessment tool in therapeutic work with children, as it is nonverbal in nature and generally popular with younger clients. More studies are needed which replicate this methodology, and which increase subject numbers.

Hall, P. E. (1997). Play therapy with sexually abused children. In H. G. Kaduson, D. Cangelosi, & C. Schaefer (Eds.), *The playing cure: Individualized play therapy for specific childhood problems* (pp.171-194). Jason Aronson.

Play therapy is the most valuable means of aiding sexually abused youngsters because the safe environment of play can quickly ease the anxiety of the young school-aged child, Hall says. Therapists must look at the short- and long-term needs of the abused child. To meet short-term needs, the play therapist should focus on play themes of anxiety about initial disclosure and how this disclosure may affect the youngster and the family if the abuser is part of the family. Interventions that foster feelings of security and safety are vital. To meet long-term needs, the play therapist should focus mainly on ego-strengthening and healing from the abuse. Treatment plans should be individualized to meet the youngster's needs. Such techniques as storytelling, symbolic play, drawing and other artistic media, play with natural media such as sand and water, imagery, role playing, board games, and even high-tech computer games can be used to personalize treatment. Hall discusses the assessment phase particularly as it relates to diagnosing dissociative identity disorder, formerly known as multiple personality disorder. She then presents a case illustration of a 6-year-old girl who was referred to therapy following a year of court involvement. As therapy progressed, the girl reported abuse by her father. Un-structured fantasy play, sand play, art therapy, games of hide-and-seek, and play with anatomically correct dolls were among the techniques used



during counseling sessions. As therapy ended, the child showed marked improvement in sleep, less fear, greater assertiveness, and higher self-esteem.

Ciottone, R. A., & Madonna, J. M. (1996). *Play therapy with sexually abused children: A synergistic clinical-developmental approach*. Jason Aronson.

Using the study of 2½ years of videotaped sessions with a young boy to explain their ideas, Ciottone and Madonna present a new approach to play therapy based in part on the work of respected clinician and teacher Haim Ginott. Ginott's work has contributed greatly to the theory and practice of play therapy, and he is known for his belief that "a child's play is his talk and toys are his words." Four main principles of the synergistic approach are discussed. They include the beliefs that with increasing rapport and trust issues of conflict and concern will emerge in therapy and do not have to be forced, the importance of the therapist maintaining rather than blurring the child-adult distinction but doing so in a reassuring rather than threatening manner, the need for the therapist to remember the power dimension when reflecting the inferred meaning of play, and the necessity of monitoring the amount of intimacy required, encouraged, or allowed. Subjected to repeated sexual abuse and affected greatly by alcoholism and drug abuse within his family, 7½-year-old Mickey saw himself as a parental figure and was suicidal by the time he began receiving professional care. Mickey was referred to a social worker from the child abuse unit of a city mental health center. Through a thorough account of the boy's therapy, the authors show the assessment and planning phase, provide a complete overview of the first play therapy session, describe how Mickey asks the therapist to safeguard him during therapy, explain the eventual disclosure of the abuse and his subsequent expression of rage, and describe the boy's eventual ability to focus more on current circumstances rather than those in the past.

Cockle, S. M., & Allen, J. A. B. (1996). Nigredo and Albedo: From darkness to light in the play therapy of a sexually abused girl. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 5(1), 31-44. DOI:10.1037/h0089095

Examines the use of symbol and metaphor to bring about emotional, intra-psychic self-healing in a 6.3-yr-old female victim of sexual abuse. The authors' theoretical framework is outlined, as well as: the role of the therapist, rhythm of therapy, mapping the process, theme development, struggle of opposites, circumambulation around the problem, progression/regression, and resolution. The theoretical base of this work is a combination of child-centered and Jungian play therapy. Finally, a description of the child's symbolic journey from the darkness of woundedness to the light of healing is provided.

Purcell, W. J. (1996). Grandiosity, trauma and self. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, 22(1), 112-127. DOI:10.1080/00754179608254936

Distortions and inversions of H. Kohut's phase of grandiosity play a major role in multi-generational patterns of child abuse and neglect. Such families are considered "upside down" in their organization: parents enact unmet needs for mirroring and grandiose assertion, while the child experiences anxiety and endures a split between defensive compliance and a turbulent, trauma-ridden inner life. Within the space of this lonely inner life, the child fixates on atavistic power fantasies and dreams of possessing or controlling its objects. Hence, distortions of power and grandiosity replicate themselves from 1 generation to the next. The therapeutic play of children from upside down families typically passes through 4 phases: (1) reenactment of trauma vignettes; (2) restoration of appropriate grandiose and mirroring themes; (3) restoration of rudimentary empathic abilities and empathy longing; and (4) the search for an appropriate parenting object. Psychoanalytically based play therapy is effective when combined with other interventions to stabilize the child's milieu. The case of a 10-yr-old boy referred for therapy illustrates these ideas.

Namka, L. (1995). Shame busting: Incorporating group social skills training, shame release and play therapy with a child who was sexually abused. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 4(1), 81-98. DOI:10.1037/h0089068

Describes trauma in children as resulting when a child is exposed to severe physical or sexual abuse and feels betrayed, overwhelmed, and helpless. A case of a 4-yr-old boy with sexualized and aggressive behavior is presented. In this case, a combination approach drawing from different theoretical approaches was used to help the S deal with shame which resulted from the trauma of being sexually abused. Therapeutic emphasis was placed on reducing the internal anger, helplessness and feelings of unworthiness through a weekly social skills training group which emphasized expressing un-comfortable feelings. Individual play therapy incorporated shame reduction techniques developed by the author. A firm classroom structure and insistence on self-responsibility along with loving nurturance from teachers helped the child set limits on acting out behavior.

Rasmussen, L. A., & Cunningham, C. (1995). Focused play therapy and non-directive play therapy: Can they be integrated? *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 4(1), 1-20. DOI:10.1300/J070v04n01\_01

There are two schools of thought for providing play therapy to children: non-directive and focused. This paper reviews the rationale for both non-directive and focused approaches to play therapy. The authors discuss why non-directive therapy alone may be ineffective in treating sexually abused children and abuse-reactive children. A prescriptive approach is proposed that combines the rapport building component of non-directive play therapy with focused techniques (i.e., cognitive-behavioral therapy, metaphors, bibliotherapy, and art therapy). The authors discuss how this integrated approach can meet the therapeutic needs of sexually abused and abuse-reactive children.

Van de Putte, S. J. (1995). A paradigm for working with child survivors of sexual abuse who exhibit sexualized behaviors during play therapy. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 4(1), 27-49. DOI:10.1037/h0089288

Discusses how play therapists cope with sexually abused children who display sexual behaviors during play therapy. The author briefly reviews the literature regarding how to handle this problem. Three types of sexualized play observed during play therapy are described: abuse reactive play, re-enactment, and symbolic sexualized play. The author discusses possible therapist reactions to, and useful therapeutic interventions for, each type of play described, including limit-setting, witnessing/active listening, and active participation.