Hi, my name is Jenny, and I am one of the Directors at IntraQuest Community. Here at IntraQuest, we are passionate about helping others on their journey of self-discovery. Play therapy is one such way of doing this. It’s a wonderfully creative mode of therapy, primarily aimed at helping children and young people explore their emotions in a safe and secure environment. Play Therapy is a gentle approach to counselling...hopefully the following pages will answer any of the questions you may have about the journey you are about to take....

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What is Therapy?


**A way of helping people look at their feelings & actions**

**Giving a person space & time**

**Helping people to overcome emotional difficulties**

**Encouraging awareness of own feelings & the feelings others have**

What is Play Therapy?

“Play Therapy is a mode of therapy that helps children to explore their feelings, to express themselves and make sense of their life experiences”

(BAPT, 2002 p.1)

Sometimes its difficult to put our feelings into words, even as adults. This is the same for children, only sometimes they do not have the vocabulary to talk about what is going on for them. This is where play comes in. For children, play is one of the most powerful ways of communicating and working things out. Play therapy enables the child or young person to explore their difficulties & understand them, often allowing them to alter their perspective, so that they are less likely to blame themselves for any of the difficulties they are facing. Throughout the following weeks your therapists role will be to help facilitate play activities where by your child/young person will be able to freely express themselves in a safe and trusting environment.
Who is play therapy for?

Play Therapy techniques have been used with both children & adults alike. However, in the main children find its relaxed, non-directive approach immediately beneficial, where as adults sometimes struggle with its lack of structure. It has been used with children whom have a variety of life experiences...some of which can be seen below as stated by The British Association of Play Therapists, 2002...

“Children or young people who have been abused
Those who have experienced loss through bereavement, family breakdown or separation from culture of origin
Children who are ill, disabled or who cope with carers or siblings with disabilities
Those who have witnessed violence or the abuse of substances”
(BAPT, 2002, p.2)

What ever the nature of the problem, usually you as parents or carers can tell that something just isn’t right. Play therapy could possibly help your child/young person to make sense of their feelings and hopefully become a happier individual. As with most therapies though, there can be a time where the behaviour of your child may worsen as they begin to deal with whatever is on their mind. It is important that during this time you remain supportive, as, similarly to adults, children also tend to take out their difficulties on those closest. Things will eventually improve though, so hang on in there!

What is the process?

- **Referral & Assessment**
  - At the referral stage your therapist will begin by collecting information from those concerned with the welfare of your child and will establish a contract for the work. This relies on good communication and everyone working together to achieve the best for your child.

- **Play Therapy Begins**
  - If all seems well and there is enough support available for you and your child, then sessions will go ahead.

- **Review**
  - Every half term/term there will be a review meeting to let all those concerned know how therapy is going, to discuss any strategies and to generally have a catch up on how your child is managing outside of the therapy room. More sessions may also be required. On average many children require at least 20 sessions.

- **Closure**
  - Once the allocated amount of sessions has been completed, there will be a closure meeting, where a summary report will be presented.
What happens in Play Therapy?

Once a child/young person has been accepted for play therapy, there will usually be a meeting to introduce the sessions. In order to help them understand, a booklet for children and young people has been produced, whereby they can both read basic explanations and look at some of the toys/equipment they can choose to use. It is recommended that you, as the parent or main carer go through the booklet together. However, we do also understand that depending on the nature of your child’s difficulty and indeed age, they may not have the concentration or perhaps interest before the sessions begin. Despite this, please try to introduce what play therapy is about, particularly before your therapist meets them.

During the initial meeting with your child/young person your therapist will introduce a way of counting down the sessions, this maybe a sticker chart/marble jar or appointment card dependant on age and interest. Every time they attend a session they will be able to add a marble to the jar or a sticker to the chart, or tick of the appropriate session depending on which method is used. This is a visual way of seeing how many sessions are left and also how many they have had which will, in turn, ease any anxieties. However, it is entirely optional as to whether they choose to use it. During the sessions your child or young person may choose to use a variety equipment examples of which can be seen below...

It is entirely up to your child/young person what they choose to use or whether, they indeed, choose to use anything. Anything that is discussed or played with within the session will be confidential, between the child/young person and the therapist. (See page 8 for more information on confidentiality). It is important that you do not pressure your child into discussing any of their session content and that you are sensitive to their needs once each session has finished. Some children/young people after sessions become extremely hungry, or tired or may need the toilet more. During the therapy session some children and young people have chosen to regress in age and may find it difficult to come out of that state of mind...do not worry if this occurs, just be sensitive to what your child may need. This may be as simple as a hug or being held. You know your child best and what they would possibly need if such a situation were to arise.
What happens in Play Therapy? (continued)

If your child or young person is having the sessions during school/college time please be assured that only relevant staff will be informed to promote sensitivity towards your child’s needs. Please also note, as mentioned previously, behaviour may appear to get worse initially as the child or young person becomes more aware of their emotions. Again, please try to remain sensitive. Things should improve within the below time frames...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Some improvement expected within...</th>
<th>Significant improvement expected within...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 6 years</td>
<td>4 Weeks</td>
<td>2-4 Months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8 years</td>
<td>4-6 Weeks</td>
<td>3-6 Months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 years</td>
<td>4-8 Weeks</td>
<td>4-12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12 years</td>
<td>4-8 Weeks</td>
<td>4-15 Months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

West, J 1996, p.19

West, J (1996) suggests that...

_The younger the child, and the less complicated the child’s background, the quicker the child’s response to play therapy._

(West, 1996, p.19)

However, if a child has experienced severe abuse and trauma, play therapy may take longer. Either way, if there is no improvement within 8 weeks, sessions will be critically examined in order to assess whether play therapy is appropriate for the child in question.

If you do have any concerns or questions then please do not hesitate to contact us via the details seen on the back page of this booklet. As mentioned previously, there will be a review at around every half –term/term where such areas can also be discussed.
Where will the sessions take place?

This is decided upon at our initial meetings....for some children having sessions within the school environment and time frame is beneficial...for other this can be stressful, so other venues, such as children centres may be hired, dependant on what is appropriate for you and your child.

*If for any reason your child can not make the session it is really important you let us know, any break in therapy can sometimes be disturbing for the child.*
Confidentiality

As mentioned previously, confidentiality will be held between the child/young person and your therapist regarding the session content. However, we work in line with the BAPT code of ethics and in line with current child protection legislation, therefore we will never keep information to ourselves where we believe your child or another young person is at risk. Where young people are working with other agencies, we will always encourage appropriate information sharing, in order that therapy compliments any other care plans in place. Consent for this must be given by the client before contact is made.

As with all therapies our therapists will have regular supervision whereby their interaction with clients will be discussed. This will enhance their understanding of their clients needs. All documentation regarding your child will be kept safe in a locked cabinet.

With these areas in mind it is necessary to obtain your permission for the Play Therapy intervention and also establish a contract between us.

I hope this brochure has helped you to understand a little more about what Play Therapy entails and that you and your child/young person will feel supported throughout this difficult time.

References

BAPT, 2002, BAPT Information, Bristol, BAPT
NSPCC, 2007, Training Manual, Stoke-on-Trent, NSPCC
For more information please contact...

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If you have any questions then please don’t hesitate to contact me or if you want any more information on Play Therapy then please visit the British Association of Play Therapist’s (BAPT) website on  
www.bapt.info

Or  
contact them by email on  
info@bapt.uk.com

Or  
Telephone them on  
01179 860 390