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DESCRIPTION OF PLAY THERAPY

Play therapy is a mental health intervention in which trained play therapists apply a systematic theoretical model using therapeutic relationship and play to help clients “prevent or resolve psychosocial difficulties and achieve optimal growth and development” (Association for Play Therapy, 2019). Although therapists have facilitated play therapy with adult and adolescent populations, play therapy is primarily a developmentally-appropriate intervention for children aged 3-12 years. Play therapy is considered a counseling modality in which therapists use play as the primary language of the therapeutic relationship. The use of play in therapy is grounded in the developmental understanding that children express themselves more fully when using toys and materials than just their words. Although individuals may use play techniques in general counseling, the term play therapy is reserved for counselors who are trained in the application of play therapy and are certified in play therapy procedures (see www.a4pt.org/page/CredentialsInfo).

Axline (1947) outlined the principles of play therapy through emphasizing the primacy of relationship, acceptance, permissiveness, safety, attunement to feelings, belief in the child’s ability to solve problems,