



## The Role of Play Therapy in Children's Mental Health

Rahmatollah Azimi \*

Clinical Psychologist and Psychometrics (University Lecturer, Child and Family therapist). Tehran, Iran

\*Corresponding Author: Rahmatollah Azimi, Clinical Psychologist and Psychometrics (University Lecturer, Child and Family therapist). Tehran, Iran.

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### Abstract

This article gives a brief overview on play therapy intervention for children. In order to diagnose and treat children's mental problems and problems, specialists, by playing and providing the necessary toys and organizing play sessions for children, monitor their behaviors and treat them while accessing the roots of children's problems. The results of play therapy include the acceptance of new principles for rethinking one's thoughts, problem-solving power, and children through play therapy learn how to better manage their relationships and internal conflicts. Play therapy can have general consequences, such as reducing anxiety and increasing self-confidence, or specific outcomes, such as changing behavior and improving with family and friends.

**Keywords:** Play therapy; mental health; anxiety

### Introduction

Play therapy is designed specifically for preschoolers and children of early school age, creating emphasis on the child's participation in treatment and by addressing issues such as controlling, mastering and accepting responsibility for changing their personal behavior [1]. Child psychotherapy and counseling through play therapy has been reported to be of considerable effectiveness for children in numerous studies. When verbal language is not enough to express children's thoughts and feelings, therapists use play therapy to help children express what has upset them [2].

### Discussion

Play therapy is a structured approach based on the theory of therapy that establishes the normal learning and communication processes of children [3]. The game has a useful therapeutic value. Today, the game has found its place in diagnosing and treating children's psychological problems. Specialists, with the help of games and providing the necessary toys and organizing play sessions for children, monitor their behaviors and treat them while accessing the roots of children's problems. Just as an adult expresses his or her problems, play is a child's language, and toys are words that a child uses to express his or her desires, and thus the child plays with his or her problems and issues [4]. Moustakas [5] observed that as play therapy progressed, disturbed child attitudes whether anger or anxiety or other negative attitudes — changed in the same order. He believed that such interpersonal communication allows the child to express and discover different levels of his emotional process and, as a result, to grow and mature [6]. Play therapy is one of the methods that can be used in different situations and contexts. Some believe that those who are in contact with the child in various fields should use the therapeutic power of play to solve their problems. Therefore, play therapy is a treatment option in schools and kindergartens, child care institutions, hospitals, mental health centers, recreational places and welfare centers [7]. Sick and hospitalized children often show many emotional and behavioral problems. They are experiencing a lot of stress; they are scared and anxious and they are worried about what awaits them. Play therapy can help solve these problems and help the child to transition from this situation. Many specialists consider play therapy as one of the inevitable services of the pediatric ward in the hospital and emphasize the need to consider children's problems in this situation [8]. Play therapy can be an individual and group method. Some psychologists consider group play therapy to be a more effective method in treating certain problems compared to the

individual method, and one of the main advantages of group play therapy is its cost-effectiveness. So that two or more children can benefit from the treatment at the same time; Therefore, it is a very good way to perform play therapy in school or other places. For example, Schaefer has shown on the basis of numerous evidences that group approach is preferable to individual approach for children suffering from family tensions and problems, and for some problems (such as aggression) it leads to better therapeutic outcomes[9]. Play therapy is a tool that children use to express positive and negative emotions and feelings, to establish relationships, to describe experiences, to reveal desires and self-fulfillment, and on the other hand, to connect the child's inner thoughts with his external world. It is noteworthy that children during play therapy transfer their negative emotions towards their environment to a visible level, and the therapist, by observing these obvious behaviors, which are manifested in a clear form, realizes the inner problems and mental preoccupations of the VP. The role of play therapy is not limited to raising the level of children's internal problems. For example, when a therapist encounters an anxious child, various causes or hypotheses can be imagined as to why and at the root of these problems. Finds for diagnosis.

### Results

When a child expresses problems and their causes in symbolic language, he has the capacity to rethink his thoughts by accepting new principles, and on the other hand, to face a new challenging problem by using coherent and more comprehensive alternative ways. This is why play therapy increases problem-solving power in children. During play therapy, children re-examine past difficult and traumatic experiences in their games to gain a better understanding of them and to be able to have more mastery over the future. Play therapy also helps calm the nerves by making physiological changes such as regulating blood flow and regulating the cardiovascular system as a result, it reduces anxiety in children [10]. Also play therapy quoted by Azlak and Caligan [11] Exercise and movement release natural opiates that calm the body and can reduce children's anxiety. Numerous studies in the study of motor activity neurology have shown that motor games affect the growth of brain cells and alter blood flow and neurochemical activity in the brain. In this way, motor activity leads to an increase in its flow in the cortex, an increase in norepinephrine and dopamine in the brain, the primary motor areas, and sensory and motor movements of the forehead of the brain. Also, during exercise, the concentration of beta-endorphins, especially circulating serotonin, increases significantly. Serotonin, one of the monoamine



neurotransmitters secreted by gastrointestinal and central nervous system neurons, increases positive mood and vitality. And becomes cheerful and reduces anxiety in people. Therefore, it can be concluded that children learn through play therapy how to manage their relationships and internal conflicts in better ways. Play therapy can have general consequences, such as reducing anxiety and increasing self-esteem, or specific outcomes, such as changing behavior and improving family and friends.

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