



Play Therapy in Schools, A Collaborative Partnership

Moving Towards Evidence-Based Practices

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Introductions

- Introduction of Presenters
- Introduction of Presentations



A Creative Field Partnership Model in Schools

- History and Rationale of Program
- Components of Program
- Second Step Curriculum
- Assessment and Evaluation

The Importance of Prevention and Early Intervention and play with young children in a school setting

- **Schools are the place where children spend the majority of their day learning, socializing building their self-esteem and learning social-emotional skills.**
- **Research today links academic achievement with mental health and schools are increasingly taking on the responsibility of protecting the health and well-being of students (Adelman and Taylor , 2005) and identifying children who may be at risk.**
- **Play is a viable modality for assessment, screening early intervention and treatment**
- **Second Step Curriculum & Play therapy.**



History of Program

- Increase in Behavior difficulties in schools with children in schools
- Increase in children exposed to chronic trauma
- Increase with children with anger and anxiety
- Increased need for social workers in school and in the classroom.
- Importance of early intervention and prevention



Safety and Learning

- When students have intense emotions, they are unable to learn
- When students learn how to mediate their emotions, they can calm down and get back to learning
- The higher the level of perceived safety, the higher the achievement of students

Components of the Partnership Program

- USC and LAUSD joined to place social work students in schools
- Social Work Interns were trained how to teach second step in the classroom with the support of teachers
- Interns observe, interact and build relationships with children
- Through the strength and difficulties questionnaire, interns, teachers and parents can identify children who may be at risk.
- Interns follow up with children individually or in small groups providing play therapy with parental consent.

What is Second Step?



- Violence Prevention Curriculum
- Teaches social-emotional skills
- Increase school success
- An Evidence Based program
- Research Validated



Second Step

Story Telling Teaches Children:

Skills For Learning

Self regulation skills

Empathy

Identifying emotions in self and others

Emotional Management

Recognize emotions, calm down, decrease negative behaviors

Problem Solving

Solve interpersonal problems, decrease impulsive and aggressive behaviors



Social-Emotional Skills

- Help children manage their emotions and behavior
- Help children have self-awareness and awareness of others' feelings
- Help children get along well with others
- Help children solve conflicts peacefully
- Help children make responsible decisions



- Teach
- Model
- Practice
- Play therapy
- Let's practice.....

USC Interns Training in Second Step Curriculum







Play is a Developmentally, Culturally and Powerful Medium for Children:

- To build relationships
- Develop cause and effect thinking
- Improve self-control
- Problem Solve
- Learn social skills
- Reduce stress and helps children calm down

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

- On- Line Assessment tool that can be used as a pre and post test
- Easy to fill out, one page document written in different languages
- Social Work interns, teachers, parents can provide information from different perspectives
- Highlights areas to focus and feedback over time
- Review Handout as Sample



The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies has also noted the Importance of creative and expressive techniques in treating children who have experienced trauma.

Foe et al, 2009

Play Therapy and Second Step

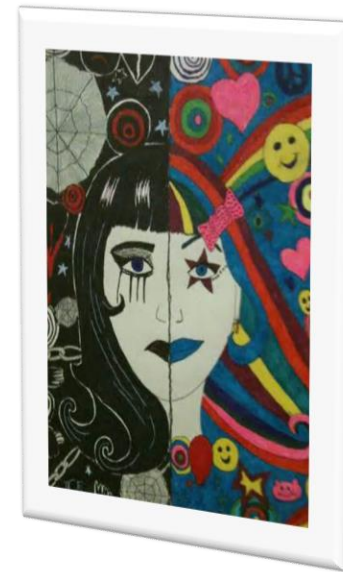
Expressive and Creative Techniques





Creative and Expressive Interventions

- Expressive arts therapy has been identified as a viable intervention with traumatized individuals
- Expressive therapies = music, art, movement, mindfulness, play and sandplay
- *Creative and expressive methods can impact neurodevelopmental changes*
- Emphasis is on the externalization of inner trauma and development of affective regulation





Neurobiology (cont.)

- **Creative and expressive techniques can assist accessing trauma memories**
- **Integrative powers**
- **Connection between mind, body, and feelings.**
- **The sensory experience of sand play reaches the limbic system and meaning is stimulated.**



- (Bandenoch, 2008)



Trauma and Expressive Techniques

ART

- Can be a normalizing experience
- Art can assist brain in processing a trauma and have a reparative effect,
- With words/language often escape the cognitive abilities of many trauma victims.
- Expressive can assist with recollections and placing things in perspective

ACTIVITY

- 1. "I AM." Using a picture of a hand, have your client write something on each finger
- 2. "I AM." Using a silhouette of a body have the client write on each part (ex. Arms what and how they feel within their arm. Connect the discussion prior experiences.



Symbols & Play: A look at some Interventions- Trauma Informed

Act out a frightening or traumatic experience symbolically and by returning to that happening again and again through play, the child moves toward an inner resolution

- Unconscious feelings communicated through play
- Use toys as symbols
- Symbols allows for the transfer of fantasies and unresolved issues to toy objects
- Through play you can distance yourself and begin the work that is needed
- Figurative language
- Issues impacting a child, show up in their play
- *Look for themes* (recurrence of certain events or topics in a child's play)



Symbolism of Windows & Doors

- A visual bridge between inside and out
- Symbols of windows are often used by writers
- It is a barrier between the viewer and the world on the other side
- Drawings and windows:
- **Windows missing** = fear of examination by others
- **Or** fear of looking through the window to see what is outside
- **Not including windows** = weariness of darkness & motivation to reconnect with self and world



D. Crenshaw & E. Green, The Symbolism of Windows and Doors in Play Therapy



Symbols (cont.)

HOW TO READ SYMBOLS

- **Think of play as figurative language**
- **Think of a child's/youth's play or art as a complex distorted assortment of their conscious and unconscious expressions**

HOW TO READ SYMBOLS

- **Emotional experiences and happenings that are important or have in some way significantly impacted a child, will show up in their play**



Symbolism: Doors

- **Doors are symbolic throughout history and across cultures**
- **Both an entrance and an exit.**
- **Passageway**
- **Gates**
- **Entrance is literal “inside something.”**
- **Door can symbolize a new beginning, a way out or what lies ahead**
- **Locked door?????**



Highlights of a few Evidenced Based Models

- *Trauma Focused CBT*
- *Multisystemic Treatment*





Evidenced Based Practices: Models

TRAUMA FOCUSED COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

- **Framework for assessing PTSD, depression, anxiety and other trauma related symptoms**
- **Respectful to cultural values**
- **Family-focused**
- **Self-efficacy emphasized**
- Cohen, A. J., Mannarino, A., & Deblinger, E. 2006. *Treating Trauma and Traumatic Grief in Children and Adolescents*. New York: Guilford Press.

TFCBT MODEL

1. **Psycho-education I parenting skills**
2. **Relaxation**
3. **Affective modulation**
4. **Cognitive processing**
5. **Narrative**
6. **In vivo desensitization**
7. **Conjoint parent-child sessions**
8. **Enhancing safety & social skills**



Selected Listing of Trauma Informed Models

- **Parent Child Psychotherapy (PCIT)**
- **The Child Family Traumatic Stress Intervention (CFTS)**
- **Child Parent Psychotherapy (CPP)**
- **Combined Parent-Child Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Families that Physically Abuse (CPC-CBT)**
- **Culturally Modified Trauma Focused Treatment (CM-TFT) (Latino and Native American and Alaska Native populations)**



Brain Processes and Sandplay

- Integrative value for the client
- Body and feeling connections unfolds
- Sensory experiences of sandplay which reach the limbic system and meaning begins to be assigned
- Integration with hippocampus and memories of past experiences; watch for what is activated by the texture of the sand. Many different emotions can surface.
- New neural connections are forming
- Symbolic/visual and tactile experiences connections are unfolding





Sand Scene Analysis: The Steps/Summary

THERAPIST

- Identify themes
- What stands out to you?
- Begin thinking about the client's life story
- What part of the scene doesn't make sense to you?
- What part doesn't fit or seem unusual?

WITH CLIENT

1. Give the scene a name
2. Have client tell the story (take me on a tour of your world)
3. Ask to join and begin a more in-depth discussion
4. Get a name for all objects
5. Probe and dialogue
6. Draw some conclusion- what is the scene telling you (together with client).



Art Therapy

A non-verbal form of communication which bypass the sensors of a client who has suppressed memories

Provides distance for the client and subsequently facilitates an objective view of their personal challenges.





Mental Illness in Artwork: Selective Listing

- ***Salad of images***, lots of eyes, floating figures, side view (paranoid, schizophrenia).
- ***Bipolar Disorder***- Mixed images, missing parts, age inappropriate drawings, bright images and movement.
- ***Copying picture*** instead of freely drawing. Obsessional defense controls the environment in order to guarantee security and safety from the unconscious



Mindfulness

- Think of mindfulness as attention to and awareness of the present moment.
- It is nonjudgmental
- You are asked to aware of thoughts, feelings & sensations, as you on the current moment.





Teaching Mindfulness

BREATHING

- *Basic breathing*
- *Belly breathing*
- *Awareness of breathing*



- *Mindfulness skills workbook for clinicians & clients. Eau Claire, WI: PESI Publishing & Media.*

MINDFULNESS OF:

- **Breathing**
- **Present movement**
- **Thoughts**
- **Emotions**
- **Physical body**



Questions and Answers

Reflection & thoughts on how to integrate Second Step and the other evidence-informed play therapy techniques into your school program