

THERAPLAY® PARENTING FOR ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Strengthening Attachment Through Play
By Karen Doyle Buckwalter
Chaddock



Who am I?

- My name is Karen Doyle Buckwalter
- I work for Chaddock in Quincy, IL
- I am a certified Theraplay® Therapist, Trainer and Supervisor
- I have spent my entire career working with parents and children and the last 23 years with foster and adoptive parents



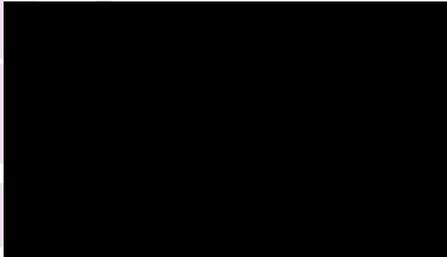
A THERAPLAY® EXPERIENCE

Name Whip, Row Row Row Your Boat

What is Theraplay®?

- Proactive, intensive, relationship focused parent-child treatment model
- Modeled on the natural patterns of healthy interaction between parents and child: the kind of interaction that leads to secure attachment and lifelong mental health
- Parents are actively involved in the treatment to enable them to take home the new ways of interacting with their child
- The practitioner and parents work together to engage the child in a healthier relationship
- Treatment involves respectful, emotionally attuned, interactive, physical play.
- Principles are based on attachment theory, intersubjectivity, brain research & the importance of play

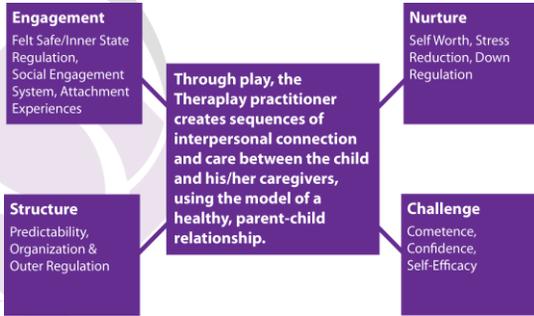
Overview video of Theraplay®



The Dimensions of Theraplay®

- Structure
- Engagement
- Nurture
- Challenge
- All encompassed in Playfulness

Theraplay® Dimensions



Characteristics of Structure in the Infant-Parent Relationship

- Adult helps baby become physically regulated.
- Focus on the body.
- Play activities have a sequence and rhythm.
- Basic safety, caregiving and play routines set up predictable sequences of organized interaction.

Structure in Theraplay®

The role of the practitioner:

- Adult is responsible leader and assures child of order
- Create a positive experience with another person for the parent and child;
- Create environmental regulation via organization, clear boundaries and expectations;
- Establishes relational regulation through pacing, activity choice and level of arousal;
- Begins to teach child to be in control of self; Addresses inner and outer disorder.



Forms the basis for predictability, safety and co-regulated interaction.

J. Peanut Butter Jelly

Structure Activities

- Stack of Hands
- Peanut Butter/Jelly



Characteristics of Engagement in the Infant-Parent Relationship

- Adult is attuned to the baby's state;
- Adult is responsive to the infant in a way that helps the baby regulate and integrate physical and emotional states.
- Caregiver is focused on baby in an exclusive way providing sensitively timed soothing and delightful interactions.

Engagement in Theraplay®

- The role of the practitioner:
 - uses her/his own Social Engagement System (SES) of in-the-moment contingent, warm, expressive facial expressions, prosodic voice and welcoming gesture and head movement to engage the parent and child's Social Engagement System
 - focuses on the child in an intensive and personal way;
 - uses what the child says and does to maintain engagement;
 - promote a calm physiological state (neuroception of safety);
 - engage the parent and child in attachment enhancing experiences of: attunement, synchrony, repair of mis-attunements, co-regulation, moments of meeting



Child feels safe, is enticed and drawn out

Engagement Activities

- Patty Cake
- Make a 4 Part Handshake



Characteristics of Nurture in the Infant-Parent Relationship

- Adult selects activities that are soothing, calming, quieting, & reassuring, such as rocking, feeding, cuddling, and holding;
- Makes the world feel safe, predictable, warm, secure.
- Child develops the expectation "people will take care of me" and "good things happen to me"

Nurture in Theraplay®

- The role of the practitioner:
- Sets up several gentle, caring and soothing activities including feeding the child;
- Meets the child's unfulfilled younger needs
- looks for opportunities to express appreciation/concern for child and parent.
- Looks for opportunities to care for child and parent throughout the session.



Builds the inner working model of the child as valued and loveable; Down regulates hyper aroused children & reduces stress

W. Little Piggy

Nurture Activities

- Check for warm hands or cool hands
- Draw an imaginary flower on partners hand



Challenge in the Infant-Parent Relationship

- Adult selects activities that help the child extend him or herself a little bit, appropriate to the child's developmental level of functioning;
- Allows child to master tension arousing experiences (extend finger to grab, peek-a-boo, Soooo Big).

Challenge in Theraplay®

- The role of the practitioner:
- supports the child's growth within the zone of proximal development by partnering with the child in playful, physical, interactive activities that extend the levels of high and low arousal;
- select and guide parent and child in activities that require a partnership and collaboration.
- Encourage the child to take mild age appropriate risk.



The intention is that by completing these challenge activities, the child feels more competent and confident and self-efficacy develops.

Mark Pillow Jump

Challenge Activities

- 3 Rounds of Thumb Wrestling
- Feather Pass



Play in Theraplay®

- The role of the practitioner:
- leads a series of simple face to face play activities;
- recruiting the parent's and child's PLAY energies;
- The activities are frequently up-regulating but can be brought down in arousal as necessary.



Creates moments of joyful interaction, pleasure, success and cooperation.

Theraplay® & Trauma

Behavioral Effects of Complex Trauma

- Lack of joy, humor
- Lack of reciprocal enjoyment
- Lack of eye contact
- Lack of selective attachment; indiscriminately charming
- Lack of empathy
- Lack of guilt and remorse
- Lack of appropriate communication
- Lack of inner-state language
- Lack of cause/effect thinking
- Lack of awareness of bodily functions
- Lack of appropriate physical boundaries
- Lack of a continuous sense of self

Core Elements of Experience for Healing Trauma

- Relational (safe)
- Relevant (developmentally matched)
- Repetitive (patterned)
- Rewarding (pleasurable)
- Rhythmic (resonant with neural patterns)
- Respectful (take the child, family and cultural values into account)

Why Theraplay® with Children Impacted by Trauma

- Theraplay focuses on building the attachment relationship
 - A secure attachment helps children deal with trauma.
 - Trauma can disrupt the attachment relationship
- Theraplay helps the child feel safe and calm.
- Theraplay helps the child learn to relax and have fun.
