



Play Therapy



Parent & Guardian
Information Leaflet

What is Play Therapy?

Play therapy is a type of psycho-therapy that works with children and young people, usually aged between 3 to 13years, but they can be older. Play therapy allows children and young people to explore and understand their feelings using toys, sand, art, puppets, music and play etc... Play therapy can help children to change their understanding of their experiences. This means that they are less likely to believe that they are to blame for difficult, painful or harmful situations within their life. Play therapy can empower and increase self-esteem and support children to be smarter, stronger and self-aware. Children/young people are then better able to deal with existing or future difficulties with in their life.

Why use Play?

Play is what all children use to learn, to communicate and to explore their worlds. Adult talking therapies, like counselling, may not be suitable for most children and young people who struggle to put their feelings into words.

For over 60 years play therapy has been used as an appropriate method in treating, supporting and helping children with a wide range of difficulties. Play therapy allows children to express themselves in a safe, trusting and non-judgemental environment. Play therapy is normally 50 minutes once a week every week, at the same day, time, and place. Children/young people may be referred to play therapy by different professionals such as teachers, social workers or they are referred because you, their parents (s)/carers (s) know they need a little extra help.

Who can Benefit from Play Therapy?

Play therapy is an effective early-intervention for children/ young people with various difficulties including:

- abuse, neglect or those that have been traumatised
- the experience of loss through bereavement, family breakdown or separation
- illness or caring for someone with an illness
- siblings with disabilities
- witnessed violence or abuse
- emotional or behavioural difficulties (e.g. depression and/or aggression) often arising from their experiences.

Who can Access Play Therapy?

Children and young people of all abilities and across the ages from the age of three years old can access play therapy. Adults can also access play therapy if they wish.

The play therapist works primarily with individual children/young people. However, Horizon Play Therapy may be able to offer group work involving parents/carers, siblings or other significant people within the child's life.



The Play Therapist and the Therapeutic Relationship

Play therapists receive extensive training in subjects such as child development and attachment. They are also trained to use play as a means for understanding and communicating with children about feelings, thoughts and behaviour.

The play therapist may need to seek information from the child's school and/or other significant adults involved in the child's life. The play therapist will ask you questions and may ask you to do activities in order to get to know you and your child. These questions/ activities facilitate the therapist to have a greater understanding and picture of your child and family in order to develop a therapeutic relationship with your child.

The relationship that develops between the child and their play therapist is very important. The child must feel comfortable, safe and understood. The playroom is a trusting environment which makes it easier for the child to express their thoughts and feelings and to use the therapy in a useful way. It is also crucial that the child knows that you are supporting the process.



What can you the Parent/Carer do to Help?

- Resist the urge to ask the child what they did in play therapy, as this will put pressure on them to comment on something, they may have difficulty understanding and they may make up something to please you.
- Please don't ask the child to 'be good' or check they have been. Therapy is not about being 'good' or 'bad' and your child must feel free to express themselves in an uncensored way.
- Play therapy can be messy to minimise theirs and your anxiety about this, it is helpful if the child can wear clothes that are OK to get messy.
- During any therapeutic intervention behaviour may appear to get worse before it gets better – please tell the child's play therapist if you have any concerns. Please also feel free to ask the play therapist any questions throughout the process.



Is Play Therapy Confidential?

Information that you share about your child and family will usually be kept confidential. The therapist may share information with other colleagues and professionals for the benefit of the child if needed and with your permission. A play therapist must share information with other professionals if they are concerned that a child is being harmed, hurting others or themselves. The therapist will usually talk to you about this first depending on the circumstances of the situation or risks.

The therapist will meet with you at regular intervals to discuss progress in therapy sessions and any changes and developments you have witnessed or experienced at home or at school. The play therapist will not discuss specific details of what your child has played or said within the sessions. This is important in order to maintain your child's trust and feelings of safety with the therapist and the process of therapy.

Confidentiality is important in play therapy; this is because it is similar to an adult going to see a counsellor. An adult would not want their partner, family or work colleagues knowing what they have said in therapy. A child may not want people knowing what they have said or done either. However, as a parent/carer you may want to know what your child has said or done in play therapy. If your child wants to talk to you about play therapy then that is perfectly fine.



The Play Therapy Process?

Horizon Play Therapy generally follows a standard procedure, which includes:

1. Referral from parent/carer, school or other professional
2. Referral discussion and liaison
3. If suitable, play therapy intervention will usually involve:
 - An initial 50minute meeting with parent(s)/carer(s)
 - An introductory individual 50minute play therapy session with the child
 - A block of 10 individual 50minute play therapy sessions with the child (some children will require more than 12 therapy sessions in total)
 - A mid-way parent/carer meeting, as required
 - Meetings with teaching staff/ other professionals, if relevant or necessary
 - A final 50minute individual play therapy session with the child;
 - A final 50minute parent/carer meeting
 - Additional meetings or contact with parent(s)/ carer(s) and/or professionals to pass on strategies for home and/or school as required
 - Mid and/or final written report, if requested.

It is important to note that ending play therapy needs to be done sensitively over several weeks. Premature or unplanned endings are detrimental to the child. This is why parents/carers and professionals need to be involved in the play therapy process in order to review the child's progress and play therapy.



Horizon Play Therapy



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Howden Insurance