

Child-Adolescents Resource Notebook

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MFT 707: Children & Adolescents in MFT

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Section 1 -Play Therapy Basics & Beyond

Key Quote:

Children under the age of 12 may not have a large vocabulary as well as not being able to fully express themselves. Meeting with a play therapist will assist the child with expressing themselves through play.

Key Thoughts:

1. Play therapy is when a clinician uses toys, puppets, miniatures, art supplies and sand tray to allow the child to act out their feelings and/or their concerns. Traditional talk therapy can be scary and unproductive for young children. Most children naturally know how to play so play therapy is an avenue that can be used to get children talking.
2. Parents play an important role when it comes to therapy with their child. The clinician needs to educate the parent on the dos and don'ts of therapy.
 - ❖ Parents need to understand how long each session will last. (30-60 minutes)
 - ❖ Parents need to understand that there is a level of confidentiality that the therapist has with the child.
 - ❖ Children should not come to therapy with nice/new clothes on. Children may mess them up when they are playing.
 - ❖ At the end of every session the therapist will not have a diagnosis for the parent.
 - ❖ Sessions can be as short as 3 sessions to as long as 90 sessions, depending on the child.
 - ❖ Most clients are between the ages of 3 to 12 years old. We must remember that the developmental level at that age is nowhere near developed. So, it may take the children a longer time to process and give the therapist feedback.
 - ❖ Parents should not drill the child about what occurred in play therapy. This takes the fun out of play and then the child is trying to remember everything that they did so they can report back to their parents.
3. I have to remember that we have about 7 to 8 different theories of play. I need to use one that best fits the child.
4. I need to remember that tracking can be done in two different ways.
 - ❖ I can track what the child is saying

Key Quote:

Everything that is done in the playroom is done to enhance the experience of play with the child. The therapist is trying to learn as much as they can from the child and about the child while using different techniques.

❖ I can track what the child is playing with

5. Restating content is something I must remember to do in each session with every child. It lets the child know that I am paying attention and I am interested in what they are making or playing with. Restating is actually saying out loud what the child is doing. For example: John I see that you are looking at the red truck? What would you like to do with it?

6. I must keep in mind that children can switch back and forth from their true self and roles that they are playing.

7. I cannot take it personal when some children may not want to come to play therapy.

Key Skills:

1. It is my job to make the child feel comfortable so if the child is afraid, I will invite the parent to come into the playroom until the child feels more comfortable.
2. Watching what the child plays with and/or touches is what I will be looking at in our session together.
3. I will monitor the child's reaction when I am tracking, and restating content. Not all children will appreciate this type of technique so I have to be sensitive to each child's wants and needs.
4. While using reflective listening I have to guess what the child's feelings are. If they are not sure how they feel I will have to show them a feeling chart so we can figure out how they are feeling.
5. I must be patient when I communicate with a child. When the child comes to me for help, I will acknowledge that they may want my help but, I will have to return the responsibility back to the child to try and figure it out on their own. Especially if it is something that I know they can accomplish.
6. I will encourage all clients that come into my playroom to follow the list of rules that are posted. Some children may not be used to rules being set and some children may love to have a list of rules they must follow.

Key Quote:

Children come to therapy to play but the battle for structure is won by the therapist. The therapist must remember that if a question is uncomfortable, it does not have to be answered. That very question can be turned around to ask the child why they want to know that particular thing.

8. Children will ask questions so I must be prepared with how I want to answer.
 - ❖ Ignore the question- smile at the child and give them eye contact but do not answer the question. The child knows I heard them but I am not answering that question. (listening)
 - ❖ Minimal encouragers-I can use some of the words in the child's original question to ask the child a question. (Listening and restating)
 - ❖ Restate the question- Just restate the question back to the child and in doing so it is my hope that they will not ask the question again or they may realize I am not going to give an answer. (Reflective listening)
 - ❖ Guess about the purpose/interpret-at times children just want to know our thoughts about certain things or something about us. (Encourage and listening)
 - ❖ Return responsibility to the child- Encourage the child that they can figure something out on their own.
 - ❖ Answer with a question – Be patient and restate the question with my own question.
 - ❖ Decline to answer- Show the child that you are not shocked by the question but do not answer.

Section 2- The Therapist Notebook for Children and Adolescents

Key Quote:

Children love to play. Sometimes as we get older, we forget how to play. Play Therapists just need to find what interests a child or pre-teen. Once that is done you have just opened up the world of make believe.

Key Thoughts:

1. The therapist must inform the parents about the importance of play therapy and the goals of the sessions. This information should be given out at the first session so the parents know what to expect.
2. Metaphors are an important part of play therapy. They help the child create various stories with the different objects in the playroom. When children use metaphors, it allows them to use their right hemisphere of the brain where sensations, creativity and images are found.
3. I must remember that when I am working with children, I can still create a family play genogram. Genograms will give me relevant information about the family. For example: deaths, substance use, mental illness and any significant family issues.
4. Puppet interviewing is important because it allows the therapist to gain knowledge on the family and how the family operates.
5. Puppet play is used when the family has difficult or upsetting news to share with a child. The puppet discusses the issue and the child will respond through the puppet. This allows the family to have a discussion which can build trust within the family.
6. Family Video games give everyone the chance to create a video game and it gives the therapist the opportunity to see who partners with whom and who is stuck in old patterns.
7. The Family card game is used as a therapeutic game which can assess various presenting problems. The cards are created before the session and they are relevant to the issues of the family.

Key Quote:

When parents learn how to conduct play therapy at home this is called Filial therapy. Playing at home helps to build a bond between the parents and child. It gives the child an outlet to express themselves in a different way.

8. When parents learn how to conduct play therapy at home this is called Filial therapy. Playing at home helps to build a bond between the parents and child. It gives the child an outlet to express themselves in a different way.
9. Relaxation training is a technique that can be used with children who have been diagnosed with anxiety as well as with children who suffer with Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Key Skills:

1. Educate the parents on what will be happening in the playroom and what is their role of involvement. Once I get the parents input on the agenda for the session the children will see that their parents are trying something new, which is called play and they will want to join in with them.
2. Clients need to pick items that represent their family when they are using metaphor in therapy. When they are speaking, they have to express themselves through the miniatures, puppets or whatever items they are using.
3. Create an anger collage with the children or family. This will allow everyone to express their feelings without directing them toward any one person. When the collage is done everyone gets a chance to share what each item on their collage means. This exercise helps to increase communication among the family.
4. I would ask the child if he/she likes to play video games. If yes, then I will ask if the family can play a video game together. This can enhance the family to come together and play. I will be listening and observing to see who leads, and who follows, as well as who communicates the most. What are their patterns? Did the family enjoy themselves playing? This is called process and content.
5. During family card games I will be watching and listening while the family is interacting with one another. I need to ensure that everyone feels heard so I can use reflection as well as tracking.

Key Quote:

Everyday items can be used to play a game. Parents need to come out of their comfort zone and just play.

6. The circle of strength bracelet is used to stop children from thinking of themselves as helpless and weak but as having power and strength. From a negative point of view to a positive point of view. As a therapist two important skills to utilize are listening skills, to better understand the negative point view, and the skill of reflecting the information a child tells you to show that you are listening. This will help in building rapport between therapist and child.

Section 3- The Adolescent in Family Therapy

Key Quote:

For some families' adolescents can be a rough time period. Just know that you are not alone and this is the age of transition.

Key Thoughts:

1. Adolescents are fighting for control and their parents are fighting for control. The more the parent pushes the more the adolescent rebels.
2. The therapist has to ensure that they are joining with all members of the family. Once joining has begun I can use the (ARCH) technique.
 - ❖ Acceptance-understanding that the entire family is having a difficult time and not judging them.
 - ❖ Respect-treat everyone fairly and allow everyone to express themselves freely. If the therapist can find one quality that they like about each family member this helps to promote a level of respect for them.
 - ❖ Curiosity-Asking open-ended questions to get the family to explain the things the therapist does not understand.
 - ❖ Honesty-Being able to tell the clients the truth with love in those tense moments.
3. Puberty occurs for girls 2 years before boys and with puberty adolescents can experience growth sprouts, hormonal fluctuation, mood swings, and lack of sleep.
4. Adolescents can be very self-centered in this stage and it is often called Adolescent Egocentrism. There are 2 parts of this idea.
 - ❖ Imaginary audience- kids feel like their behavior is important to everyone. This idea has really been heightened with the use of Instagram, Facebook and Tik Tok. Everything that the adolescent does, eats or wears can instantly be seen by many in minutes.
 - ❖ Personal fable- adolescent feels like they are invincible. They will take risks because they feel like nothing will happen to them. Even if they know something harmful happened to someone else, they still believe that they will be fine.

Key Quote:

Parents bring their adolescent to therapy for the therapist to fix their child. The therapist cannot fix the child. They can help to make the relationship less combative.

5. Peer relationships are very important to adolescents. They feel like their friends are the only ones that understand what they are going through, especially with their parents. At times adolescents will listen to their peer group and not their parents' advice.
6. Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual (GLB)- therapist should not ask an adolescent if they are homosexual or heterosexual. Like a rainbow there are so many different classifications which we need to be sensitive to. Adolescence at times can fluctuate with their sexual identity. The most important thing to look out for are the risk factors when working with the GLB community. Suicidal ideation is high with this community.

Key Skills:

1. Listen closely to everyone that comes to therapy. The therapist has to understand their point of view. When a family is in crisis the therapist has to be the level headed person in the room. Once the family members feel heard this will build trust in the therapist and the process.
2. I must remember that it is not my job to try and change the child or parent's personality. The therapist is in the room to assist with disrupting the unhelpful patterns. For example, I would let a family argue so I can see what everyone says or does during those times. This will give me an idea of what areas we need to work on.
3. I need to encourage the parents that they are doing a good job and give them some tools to change the unhealthy cycle that they are in. Parents need to explain to their adolescent why they are being strict and why they may be feeling afraid about the decisions that their children are making.
4. Certain times in the therapy session the therapist may need to take sides with one of the parents. This will force the other parent to think about their reaction and change their negative pattern.
5. When working with the GLB community I have to encourage the parents to listen to their adolescent without judgment, even if their ideas are not what they would like them to be.

Key Quote:

Children do not come with a manual. Parents are trying to do the best that they can. If the parent did not have a good childhood, they do not have any good examples.

6. Do not abandon my plan of treatment midway through the sessions just because it seems like it is not working. The therapist needs to stay the course until I see the change that I am trying to get.
7. I must be willing to challenge the family to change the negative pattern that they are in and teach them how to communicate differently.
8. Remind the parents that they have to change the way they may be responding to their children because their behavior can trigger the children.
9. Give the family small tasks to complete during the week and ask them next week if they were done. This holds the family accountable

Section 4 – DBT Skills Manual for Adolescents

Key Quote:

Your feelings are not facts. If you want to know for sure what you are feeling you must ask the person.

Key Thoughts:

1. DBT training course can run from 6 months to 1 year. Most sessions are 2 hours.
Therapists must ensure that there is a strong level of commitment from all families since the sessions are done in a group setting.
2. Sometimes adolescents display emotional and behavioral irregularities. This stops them from having a strong and rewarding relationship with their family and friends.
3. Parents are struggling with trying to implement some of the information that they receive, so it is important to support the parents with additional training in DBT. This will allow the parents to feel empowered when they use the different techniques with their children.
4. Therapist has to ensure that all family members are present for all sessions. If the family or one person cannot make a session it is important for the therapist to find out what happened.
5. When homework is given, it is expected that it will be done before the next meeting. If it is not the therapist should give the family a few minutes to complete the homework in the session.
6. DBT has 5 treatment strategies
 - ❖ Dialectical strategies
 - ❖ Validation strategies
 - ❖ Problem solving strategies
 - ❖ Stylistic strategies
 - ❖ Case management/structural strategies
7. DBT can be helpful with adolescents who are suffering with: suicide, eating disorders, drinking, drug abuse, cutting, promiscuity and borderline personality disorders.

Key Quote:

Children do not come with a manual so at times both parents and child need some help with regulating their emotions.

Key Skills:

1. DBT has 5 modules which can be used to assist clients
 - ❖ Mindfulness skills
 - ❖ Emotion Regulation skills
 - ❖ Interpersonal Effectiveness skills
 - ❖ Distress Tolerance skills
 - ❖ Walking the Middle Path skills
2. When meeting with a client for the first time I need to remember to include their parents. Their point of view on the issue is important to me. They will have a full picture of what is happening in the family that the client may not say.
3. Assessment is need when working with emotionally dysregulated and multi-problem clients to assist with suicidal behaviors or tendencies.
4. In depth training is needed for the therapist so they are well versed in DBT and conducting all of the assessments and treatment plans.
5. Therapists have to be engaging when working with an emotionally dysregulated adolescent. The adolescent has been at school all day and they are coming in the evening to your sessions so the therapist must be upbeat and interesting.
6. Use DEAR MAN when I want to ask for something or just saying no. DEAR MAN stands for (Describe, Express, Assert, Reinforce, stay Mindful, Appear confident, Negotiate). The GIVE skill teaches how to build positive relationships and de-escalate conflicts.

Section 5-Videos

Key Quote: Conducting play therapy is not always easy but it is very rewarding. You do not need a lot of items in order for you to get started.

Play Therapy: Basics for Beginning Students

Key Thoughts: Play therapy is a kind of therapy that uses toys and play materials to assist children with their communication skills regarding difficulties in their lives.

Key Skills: Give the child the opportunity to walk around and pick toys that interest them. Let the child know that you care about them and that you are right there if they need help.

Toys and Materials for Play Therapy

Key Thoughts: You do not need to spend a lot of money buying expensive toys. The key items that would be needed are puppets, sand tray, dolls family, scary toys and doll house.

Key Skills: Purchase toys that can have a therapeutic use. You want your toys to reflect what is in a home so children can play out what is happening. Children have limited verbal skills at this age

CBT for Depressed Adolescents

Key Thoughts: Most adolescents are more prone to depression; they have negative thoughts. Depression can be associated with their social life or the lack thereof. Depression also can cause panic attacks and constant worry about their future.

Key Skills: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is helpful when working with adolescents with depression. Therapists must remember that the family members should be involved in assisting the adolescent achieve their goals. Therapy between the client and therapist is a collaborative effort so they can come up with goals for the sessions.

Key Quote: All children are at different developmental levels. Be patient and just join with the child. This might be the first time an adult actually listens to them.

The Play Therapists' Language of Change: Releasing Children's Creative Capacities

Key Thoughts: Play Therapists can answer the child's question with a question. The child needs to be able to figure out how to do things without help.

Key Skills: Need to constantly reflect questions back to the child. This helps them become independent. Kids should try to struggle then think about a way to complete the task.

Techniques of Play Therapy: A Clinical Demonstration

Key Thoughts: Due to a child's limited verbal skills they are able to better communicate by playing.

Key Skills: I need to remember that parents can be my strongest ally in helping out with the child's treatment.

Distinguished Contributors to Play Therapy Series, Jungian Analytical Play Therapy: A Clinical Session and Interview

Key Thoughts: Children are trying to form a relationship with the therapist. The therapist has to let the child lead in the playroom.

Key Skills: the therapist should play with the child if they request that they play with them. This will allow the child to get comfortable with the therapist.

Key Quote: Every child needs something different from the therapist. Be flexible. It is not about you.

Distinguished Contributors to Play Therapy Series, Relationship Play Therapy: A Clinical Session

Key Thoughts: Play therapy should end on a positive note when you have a child who is hostile.

Key Skills: Play with the child but limits need to be set in the moment. Get the child to agree with the limits so they can feel involved in the process.

Essentials of Play Therapy with Abused Children

Key Thoughts: Play therapy helps children work out any problems or painful memories that they are dealing with.

Key Skills: Therapists need to build a relationship with the child. When the child first comes in they should be given a tour of the playroom. Let the parent stay in the playroom for the first couple of sessions until the child feels comfortable.

OCD: Ten best Treatment Strategies for Children & Adolescents

Key Thoughts: It can take 15 years before someone can get a diagnosis of OCD. OCD is a neurobiological illness which affects a person's behaviors and the brain. Obsessions are repetitive thoughts, urges, or images that cause significant distress. Compulsion is what the child does to feel better.

Key Skills: No matter the age of the child make sure you get the parents involved. Ask the child to write down or draw what is going on when they experience the OCD.

Key Quote: Therapist must find the correct theory that will be most helpful to each child.

Brief Therapy Inside Out, Building on Adolescent Expertise: A Solution Oriented Brief Therapy Approach

Key Thoughts: This type of therapy uses some techniques from 2-3 other theories. It is a brief way of looking at the client's problem and trying to change their patterns.

Key Skills: Ask the client what they want to change and work on that specific thing. Keep an open mind when working with families or one person. Do not judge their situation. Work on whatever is a problem for them.

Three Approaches to Counseling Adolescents

Key Thoughts: This video gave three different ways to look at therapy through the lens of Narrative, Cognitive Behavior and Solution Focus.

Key Skills: Narrative therapy focused on the dominant narrative that the client had regarding her family. Cognitive behavioral was used to discuss the clients distorted thoughts. Solution focus was used to pull out the exceptions in the client's story

Three Counseling Approaches: One Adolescent Client

Key Thoughts: This video focused on Solution focus therapy, Reality therapy and Cognitive behavior therapy. Reality therapy focused on the discrepancy between a desired state of where the client is and where they would like to be.

Key Skills: This is a short-term therapy. You are asking the client to rank their issue or concern from 1 to 10 so the therapist can get an idea of the level of seriousness that the client is feeling. The therapist has to inquire of the client's motivation level and provide exceptions.

Key Quote: Do not limit yourself. There are several expressive arts that you can use with your client.

Child-Centered Play Therapy: A Clinical Session

Key Thoughts: The child decides what they want to play with while in the playroom. Children use toys instead of their words and play time is the language.

Key Skills: Remember to be with the child and not to insert myself into what they are doing. The child plays with whatever they like and I just comment on what they chose to play with. Responsibility is returned to the child when they ask for help with something that I know they can handle.

Expressive Arts with Adolescents

Key Thoughts: There are 4 ways you can use expressive arts. Music, Drawing, Sand and Play, these 4 can be used to help adolescents express their feelings and give them the self-confidence they need.

Key Skills: Art is an individual activity that is not judged by the therapist. Sand play is a nonverbal kinesthetic expressive art intervention. Music can be actual instruments or music from a laptop, PC or iPhone.

