

ACORN EDUCATION AND CARE

Sand Tray Therapy

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What is Sand Tray Therapy?

Sand tray therapy is primarily a nonverbal therapeutic method, where the sand and miniatures become the language through which the child or young person can communicate their own feelings, needs and desires. It can become a narrative based process to explore their internal world.

Children and young people use sand and miniatures as the means of communication; expressing their emotions and practicing problem and conflict solving.

The use of the sand tray in the therapeutic process enables the child or young person to explore past and present perceptions of their worlds and helps them plan a future direction towards happier and healthier lives. Sand tray therapy aids reflection to help children and young people explore their relationships with self and others (Ford & Robey, 2013).

Sand Tray Therapists

Sand tray therapy is delivered by creative therapists who are trained in using the technique of sand tray. The children and

previous experience and it can be used by both children and adults. They are given the freedom to create scenes that represent their internal states, emotions, feelings, current or past situations.

Sand tray therapy “empowers the child or young person to be masters of their own lives... capitalizing on their competency areas, respecting their defences and giving them the room to tell their painful stories, when, if they are ready to do so” (Homeyer & Sweeney, 1998; Selekman, 1997, p.4).

Sand tray therapy is suitable for people of all ages and backgrounds and has a number of advantages over conventional talking therapies.

- It does not require disclosure of difficult personal material
- The child or young person is in control of the session
- Works mostly on an unconscious level and does not demand conscious effort
- Helps to enhance creativity and intuition

- Promotes sense of play and fun
- Safe, gentle and powerful at the same time
- Can help enhance spiritual connection and growth
- There is no requirement for home tasks to be completed between sessions

Conclusion

Sand tray therapy is a safe environment- a place for the child or young person to feel deeply understood by a trained therapist to aid them in areas such as relationships, identity and much more. The symbolism of sand play figures allows space to build, explore and begin to understand the individual's internal world that can be expressed safely and positively through the sand tray. Thus, the role of the therapist is to build upon attuning to the child or young person's needs and provide containment.

At Acorn Education and Care all young people who live with us have a named therapist assigned to them and can access individual or group therapy if they wish to. There is a range of therapies available across the services including art psychotherapy, play therapy and psychotherapy. All our therapists are registered with either the Health and Care Professions Council or their professional body.

Useful Resources

- The Association of integrative Sandplay Therapy (AIST): www.sandplaytherapy.co.uk
- De Domenico, G. (1999). Sandtray Worldplay: Psychotherapeutic Transformational and Educational Methods for Growth and Healing in Diverse Settings. Oakland: Vision Quest Into Symbolic Reality.
- Gallerani, T., Dybicz, P. (2011). Postmodern Sandplay: An Introduction for Play Therapists. International Journal of Play Therapy. Vol. 20, NO.3, 165-177.

- Homeyer, L. A. , &Sweeney,D.S. (1998). Sandtray: A practical manual. Royal Oak, MI: Self-Esteem shop.
- Homeyer, L. Sweeney, D. (2011). Sandtray therapy: A practical Manual. New York. NY: Routle.
- Ford, C., Robey, P.A. (2013). Finding reality in the sand : Transitions with children using choice theory, reality therapy and sandplay. International Journal of Choice and Reality Therapy. Vol 33 (1)
- Nash,J.B., &Schaefer, C.E. (2011). Play Therapy: Basics concepts and practices. IN C. Schaefer. Foundations of play therapy (2nd ed), pp.3-14. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Selekman ,M. (1997). Solution-focused therapy with children. New York: Guildford Press.
- Taylor, E.R. (2009). Sandtray and Solution-Focused Therapy. International Journal of Play Therapy. Vol. 18, No 1,56-68.
- Ramsey, L.C. (2014). Windows and Bridges of Sand: Cross-Cultural Counselling Using Sand Tray Methods. Procedia-Social and Behavioural Scences 159 (2014) 541-545.

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