Play Therapy in Schools: Implementing a Fun Effective Program.

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Overview

- Introduction and Purpose
- Explaining Play Therapy to Administration and School Staff
- Engaging Parents
- Groups or Individual Play Sessions
- Toy Selecting
- Obstacles
- Questions
Introduction and Purpose

- Play is the child’s language and toys are their words (Landreth 2002)
- Play therapy is a culturally responsive intervention (Bratton, Ray, & Landreth 2008)
- Schools are a learning environment and what better way to learn about the student than to observe their play
School Mental Health Professionals Can use play therapy too…

- Communicate with the student
- Help students build skills in many areas
- Improve students’ adjustment to school environment
- Improve peer relationships
- Prevent bullying, school violence, aggression
- Address needs of at risk students
- Remove emotional and behavioral obstacles to learning.
Getting School Administration and Teachers on Board

- Presentation for School Board/Charter Board
  - Important to speak their language of “dollars and cents”
  - Use simple language to explain what play therapy is and how effective it can be.
  - Present research and facts.
  - Speak to cognitive stages.
School Staff Presentation

- Time to “sell” play therapy
- Make the presentation fun and playful!
  - Bring toys to show the power of play.
  - Share experiences and general case studies.
- Create a brochure about Play Therapy!
Group Activity

- Ice Breaker
- Beach Ball Toss
Engaging Parents

- Parents are one of the most important aspects of a successful play therapy program in schools.
- Communication is key!
  - Consults with Parents
  - Newsletter Information
  - Parent Organization Meetings
  - CPRT
Group or Individual?

What is best for student?
Are students available for individual sessions?
Is clinician comfortable with child centered or directive?
Groups work for...

- Social Skills Needs
- Building Friendship
- Building Empathy
- Same grade level students
- Servicing many students
Group References
Individual Sessions

- Aggressive Students
- Bullied Students
- Student who are the bully
- Students who are new to “seeing the counselor”
Toy Selection

O Certain factors to consider when selecting toys
O Space - Will it be a permanent space or a traveling space
  O Cost of Toys
  O Will certain toys be restricted
  O Guns? Weapons? Handcuffs?
Playroom Suggestions

- Child Centered
  - Puppets (aggressive and real life)
  - Real life toys (doll house, dolls, toy phones)
  - Creative (art supplies, crayons, markers)
  - Aggressive (handcuffs, toy soldiers, animal figures)

- Directive
  - Board Games (Candy Land, Chutes and Ladders)
  - Books (Julia Cook, Bucket Filler)
  - Mini Dry Erase Boards and Markers
School Play Room
Obstacles

- Scheduling
- Time
- Consistency
- Parent Follow up
- Child’s Presentation
Questions?
References