

CENTER FOR HEALING TRAUMA & ATTACHMENT

PLAY THERAPY AGREEMENT FOR PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S)

The following is an explanation of play therapy and the therapeutic process. As you read this information, you may want to make some notes so that you can refer any questions to your child's play therapist.

Importance of play for children:

- Play is the child's natural way of communicating.
- During play, children learn about their physical surroundings, their own capabilities and limitations, social rules and the difference between fantasy and reality.
- Play promotes healthy development in children.
- Children can often communicate their difficulties more effectively through play than they can through language.

What is play therapy?

Play therapy is to children what "talk therapy" is to adults. When adults have problems, it often helps if they can share their thoughts and feelings with a therapist or trusted friend. Children don't have the ability to express themselves with words like adults do, so it is difficult for them to "talk" about things that worry or bother them. Play therapy allows children to communicate through play, their most natural form of expression. The toys the children use in play therapy help them play out what they may be feeling, what they have experienced, and what they would like to be different. This experience enables them to attach words to their experiences, leading to a release of emotions and further recovery for the child.

Why does my child need play therapy?

In the process of growing up, most children experience difficulty coping at some time (at home, in school, with divorce/separation, with socialization, as a result of trauma or abuse, etc.), or they exhibit behaviors which concern their parents or teachers. Generally, if you, your child's teacher or a physician is concerned about your child's behavior or the difficulty of adjusting, play therapy is the recommended approach to helping your child.

What can I expect from play therapy?

There is much more freedom in the play therapy room than is allowed in other areas of the child's life. During the therapy time, every thought and feeling and almost all actions of the child are accepted. This freedom is necessary so that the child will feel accepted, safe, and trusting enough to reveal their fears and problems. There is no such thing as wrong or bad behavior in play therapy. In play therapy, the therapist will not "pump" the child for information about their life or an abusive incident. Children are allowed to work through their problems at their own pace. In play therapy, children may spill paint, sand or other messy materials on themselves. (Remember, there are few limits here). Therefore, you are encouraged to bring your child in play clothes.

What do I tell my child about play therapy?

Before the child comes in for their first session, they will need to know something about play therapy. You can tell them that they will be coming to a place that has a special room with toys. Tell them that they will be meeting a grown-up named _____ who will be taking them to the playroom and staying with them there. It is helpful to let them know they will be coming back every week, that this is not just one visit. If your child wants to know more about why they are coming, you may say something like, "when things are difficult for you at home, school, in the family, etc., sometimes it helps to have a special place to play and a special person to help." You may also tell them that it is okay to talk about those things in the playroom with the therapist. It helps if you can arrive a few minutes early for each appointment and take your child to the bathroom. Reassure your child that you will be waiting for them when the session is over.