

What is Play Therapy?

Child-Centred Play Therapy (CCPT) is a non-directive mental health intervention for children. In this psychotherapy approach, the relationship between the child and therapist is the foundation for therapeutic change.



As a developmentally sensitive intervention, CCPT is based on a child's natural medium of self-expression: Play. Accordingly, the therapeutic materials are carefully selected to facilitate communication.

But the most important resource in the playroom is the therapist. Just like in other modalities, the child-clinician relationship is the highest predictor of positive treatment outcomes.

How does it work?

The therapist builds an unconditional relationship within a warm, safe and predictable environment. This special connection is healing for the child.

The child uses the whole self —mind and body— to express unconscious thoughts, wishes, fears, anxieties and so forth. This helps them process 'stuck' emotions and thoughts. Through such play, the therapist gains an understanding of the child's needs and experiences without asking questions.

CCPT specialists are trained to read the metaphors of the play (themes) and observe emerging patterns. These observations help the clinician to reflect thoughts and feelings back to the child, thus addressing the underlying sources of challenges and allowing the child to gain insight into their own behaviours.

As internal growth increases, behavioural symptoms will decrease. This leads to a stronger person (resilience and inner strength), more able to tolerate triggers and changes. The effects are progressively noticed in the child's daily functioning.

CCPT follows the child's own internal process. It is important to trust that.

Who benefits from play therapy?

Play Therapy works well for children who are struggling with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties that affect their sense of well-being and ability to learn and grow optimally, such as:

- Common childhood problems and concerns (e.g. low self-esteem, poor social skills, bullying and self-regulation issues).
- Anxiety and low mood.
- Communication difficulties (e.g. struggling to express thoughts, feelings and emotions).
- Adjustment to life events (e.g. birth of sibling, starting school or moving house away from family and friends).
- Trauma (e.g. medical, relational or developmental).
- Grief and loss, including parent separation and family breakdown.

Play Therapy does not resolve problems of a neurological, biological or organic nature, such as ADHD, OCD or biochemical depression. But it is a highly effective complementary treatment for children with these diagnoses, as they tend to have concurrent emotional problems.

What skills can a child develop from engaging in play therapy?

There are four universal outcomes of Play Therapy, regardless of the reason why the child began treatment: Increased self-esteem, increased regulation, increased worldview and increased emotional vocabulary.

These, in turn, lead to an improvement in prosocial and problem-solving skills, as well as a greater sense of self, independence, autonomy, empathy, and responsibility for own actions and behaviours.

The therapist's role

While the therapist's role is non-directive, it is not a passive one. The therapist remains active and disciplined throughout treatment by using their skills in a consistent, predictable manner to create an environment that promotes the child's self-expression and self-direction.

CCPT is an evidence-based approach and one of the most effective therapy modalities for children aged 3 to 11.

How many sessions are needed?

The duration of treatment can range between 20 and 40 sessions or more, depending on each individual child. But the average is 27 to 30 sessions. Each session is 45 minutes long.

Booking an appointment

The first step is to schedule an initial parent consultation.

New clients do not need a GP referral. Our services are not covered by Medicare. We can see self-managed NDIS and private paying clients.

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