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Barriers to Knock Down in Family Play Therapy

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Play Therapy

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sYif0gsFgQ>
- “Play therapy is a process in which a child who is having trouble in his relationship to the biopsychosocial world at home, the psychosocial world at school or the the psychosocial world in the playground is taken into an experimental laboratory by a parent surrogate” (Keith & Whittaker, 1981).
- Plato once said, “you can discover more about a person in an hour of play than a year of conversation.”

Play Therapy

- A review of the literature reveals that children who engage in play therapy in family therapy sessions, participate more and are less anxious in therapy.
- There are many parallels between the process of play therapy and family therapy such as structure is critical, scope is increased through magic and rituals, play constantly mixes the symbolic and the real, primary and secondary process, and body language is always implicit.
- For future research, studies should be conducted on families with diverse cultural backgrounds. This is especially important because children play within the context of their culture.
- A therapist should be mindful not to pathologize a child for the way they are interacting/ playing in therapy without understanding the context of their cultural upbringing.
- Lund et al addresses contextual factors by discussing diversity issues and reminds the readers that both adults and children are affected by diversity stressors, especially if they are a part of a marginalized group.
- A prime example of this is children in schools, school can be a diverse environment and children can be affected by the stressors that go along with this. It is encouraged that future research assesses the differences in play methods and ways of interacting in play therapy with minority children.

Play Therapy/ Family Therapy

- Family therapists “do not need special techniques to include children in therapy because any theory within couple and family therapy can easily become child friendly with a little adaptation and creativity” (Lund et al, 2002, p.448).
- This coincides with systems theory; a family’s system has multiple parts and a child is included in those parts, the parts make up the whole family, thus leaving them out would go against the concept of systems theory (Lund et al, 2002).
- In Langarten’s “Family Art Psychotherapy” she describes how therapists from multiple theoretical orientations can implement art therapy and assess their clients from that specific theory.
- For example, a structural family therapist acts as a director, thus they can design tasks that disrupt the system, causing the family to rearranging their roles which would work towards the goal of changing boundaries and restricting the system (Landgarten, 1987).

Barriers

- Many barriers prevent therapists from including young children in family therapy” (Lund et al, 2002, p.445).
- A survey found that therapists believed it was acceptable to not include children in the therapy sessions if the therapist was uncomfortable.
- This is a skewed belief, therapists should be educated on the importance of including children. Traditional family therapy approaches are significantly geared more towards adolescents and adults.
 - "MFTs tend to view child-focuses work as the realm of of child or play therapists rather than family therapists" (Willis & Crane, 2014, p.288).

Barriers

- Child- focused work is the duty of a family therapist and should not be over-looked.
 - Family therapists are more likely to have high caseloads of children, and therapists who lack training of family work are reluctant to include children as part of the therapy process (Keith & Whitaker, 1981).
- This reiterates the point that the merging of concepts (family therapy/ systems theory and play therapy) are vital and thus, need to be taught in higher education programs.
- Children play vital roles in the family's system and therefore, should be treated as such.
- Once the therapist believes it is important then they can educate the families on why it is as well. If the child feels their opinion is important, they are more likely to participate.

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