



# the MIND reader

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## Basics of Play Therapy

By: Julie Kostrey

Summertime is the perfect time to focus on fun and play. At Mind Spa, a substantial portion of our therapeutic work is with children and families. Therefore, we naturally incorporate various

play therapy approaches in our work. Below are some common questions that people often have when considering play therapy for their children.

### Does my child need play therapy?

Throughout their lives, most children go through difficult times, such as the divorce of their parents, trouble making friends, or adjusting to changes at school or home. Some children need more help than others to get through these times, especially if more significant mental health issues are present (such as Autism, ADHD, and Learning Disorders). If you or other adults in your child's life are concerned about your child's behavior, play therapy can help. It is the most appropriate treatment for helping your child work through difficult times and to also help you gain a better understanding of what your child is going through.

### Why play therapy?

Play Therapy is the most appropriate method of treatment for children who are having difficulties coping with life situations. Children lack the robust cognitive skills to express themselves with words, but they are fluent in the language of play. Play therapy allows them to express themselves in the ways they are most comfortable and natural.

### What toys are in a playroom and why?

Toys are carefully selected for the play therapy room to facilitate creative and emotional expression from children. The typical toys found in a therapy playroom can be played with in many ways, can have multiple functions and meanings, and allow for decision-making in children. They are also very durable and sturdy to allow for repeated use and rough play.

### How long does a child participate in play therapy?

The length of time a child is seen in play therapy varies from child to child. It depends upon the severity of the trauma or adjustment, the child's personality, and the child's perception. This can be discussed with your child's play therapist during consultation times.

### What's the difference between play therapy and playing with my child at home?

Play therapists are specifically trained to provide an environment of acceptance, empathy, and understanding in the play therapy room. Play therapy **IS NOT** the same thing as playing. Play therapy uses the child's natural tendency to "play out" their reactions to life situations, in the presence of a trained play therapist, to help the child feel accepted and understood and gain a sense of control or understanding of difficult situations. Through play, strong emotions are released and undesirable coping behaviors can decrease, allowing more hopeful and positive emotions to emerge and new coping skills to be learned. (1)

“You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.”

-Plato

“The opposite of play is not work, it is depression”.

-Brian Sutton-Smith

“If you never did, you should. These things are fun, and fun is good!”

- Dr. Seuss

“My childhood may be over, but that doesn't mean play-time is.”

- Ron Olson

“Every child is an artist, the problem is staying an artist when you grow up.”

- Picasso

“Play is the highest form of research.”

- Albert Einstein

## Rainbow Bubble Snake

Materials:

- Empty water bottle
- Mismatched Sock
- Duct Tape
- Dish Soap
- Food Coloring



Start by cutting the bottom of the water bottle off. Next slide the sock over the bottom of the bottle. Use duct tape to secure sock.

Pour some dish soap into a shallow container with a little bit of water and gently mix.

Dip the sock covered bubble blower into the solution and gently blow. For colorful bubble snakes drop the food coloring onto the sock covered end.



Be sure to remind your kids to only blow into the water bottle, if they inhale, they will get a mouth full of bubbles! (2)

## The Need for Play!

By: Doug Blocksma

Taking full advantage of the summer time months often means time spent outside, watching your shoulders turn shades of brown (or red, if you're like me) as you avoid the housework awaiting you back inside. While this impulse to avoid dirty dishes may at first feel like procrastination, the truth is that having time for play – whether you are a kid or just a kid at heart – is very important!

The researcher Stuart Brown describes the importance of understanding your own “play history” as the key to finding your way back to the “irrational joy” of child-like play. For each person this is a different kind of play, and for each person the path back to this place can be more or less complicated. It is not enough to accept the culturally prescribed downtime that may be the most convenient option in that moment. Perhaps you find yourself watching reruns of House Hunters or taking up that Madden season for the fourth time, but afterwards you don't actually feel rejuvenated – if anything, you feel worse!

If you are noticing that your downtime doesn't really recharge you, it might be due to not ‘playing’ in an authentic way. Of course, the ability to turn on the TV is much easier than finding these more authentic forms of play, in the same way a microwave dinner is easier to prepare than a meal cooked from scratch: both are convenient and fast, but ultimately unfulfilling. “When people know their core truths and live in accord with... their ‘play personality’”, the result is always a life of incredible power and grace.” (4)

It is more work to keep a mountain bike tuned up and to find time to get out on the trail. It is more difficult to keep up with a social group of table-top gamers and coordinate game nights. Going to the library to return books or engage in a book club discussion group will always be more work than sitting silently in front of that third repeat of Sports Center. But finding these forms of play, especially when the sun shines later into the day, is just as important as anything else and will show benefit in other parts of your life as well. It will allow you to be more adaptable, patient, and resilient in the more challenging places in your life.

## Exploding Chalk Paint Art

Materials:

- Zip Seal Sandwich Bags
- Corn Starch
- Vinegar
- Flood Coloring
- Baking Soda



In each bag mix a few tsp of corn starch with vinegar until there's a thick liquid consistency. Fill the bag at least 1/3 of the way with this liquid chalk mixture. Add a few drops of food coloring for color (once ingredients are in the bag, let your little one help mix them together!).

Next, use a square piece of paper towel, place the baking soda in the middle, and fold the paper towel all around it. No need to measure, but go hefty, the more you use for each bag the bigger the explosion.

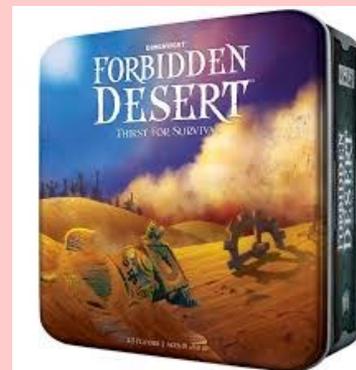
When you are ready to start the fun quickly toss a baking soda bomb into the bag and quickly seal. The bags will slowly expand, getting bigger and bigger until they Pop! (3)

## Can't Stand the Heat? Then This Game Is For You! By: Mark Russell

I love board games. They are a great way to spend time with family and friends. There has been a resurgence of quality board games in the last few years. One result of this board game renaissance is the advent of cooperative games. Rather than playing against your friends, you work together to beat the board itself. The mechanics of these games usually incorporate the board's "turn" at the end of each player's turn. There are generally a few ways to win or lose and ways to make the game easier or harder.

One such game that I have enjoyed is called Forbidden Desert. You are part of a group of architects searching for an ancient airship. Unfortunately, as you are arriving at the dig sight, a nasty sandstorm kicks up that causes your plane to crash. The threat of being buried alive in the sandstorm or dying of thirst under a hot desert sun means you must successfully excavate the airship and use the ancient device to escape. I know it sounds a bit silly, but the gameplay itself is very fun.

Cooperative board games encourage table talk, strategy, and good teamwork to successfully win the game. Where more traditional board games may have collaborative elements, these games put teamwork in the spotlight. A few other cooperative board games include: Pandemic, Shadows Over Camelot, and Forbidden Island. Some popular competitive board games that are a cut above the rest include: Settlers of Catan, 7 Wonders, and Carcassonne. (5)



## Weeding Out Perfectionism

Excerpt From: Rev. Dr. Scott Stoner

I was talking to a friend the other day who described himself as a lawn perfectionist, while at the same time he was doing his best to get over the trait that had earned him his self-given title. He explained that the problem with being a lawn perfectionist is that even when your lawn is 98 percent weed free, the only thing about the lawn that you notice is the few places where crabgrass is interrupting the beautiful stretches of grass. While no one would ever confuse me with a lawn perfectionist, I certainly can be a perfectionist in other areas of my life, and so I know of what my friends speak. In fact, I shared with my friend that I describe myself as a "recovering perfectionist." I commit one day at a time to not wearing myself and others out by being a perfectionist.

Summer is not only the season when we spend time thinking about, working on, and enjoying gardens, lawns, and parks, it is also the season of the year that we think about, plan, and enjoy weddings. As I was thinking about weddings this week and all of the relationships that will be celebrated, I realized that my lawn perfectionist friend provided me with an ideal metaphor for helping those couples think about how to build healthy, long lasting relationships and marriages.

Every relationship contains some weeds of imperfection. Why? This is because every relationship is made up of two imperfect people who at times naturally become self-centered, irritable, and crabby. If we struggle with perfectionism in our relationships then it will be the case that the only thing we can see in our partner is his or her "weeds." If we make a habit of this pretty soon we may overlook all of the good traits in our partner. We have a saying in Living Compass that points out that "Whatever we pay attention to is what will grow." If you only pay attention to the crabgrass in someone you love, pretty soon that's all you will see. On the other hand, if you pay attention to what you love and appreciate about that person, most likely the weeds will soon be less noticeable. Obviously, if there is a weed growing in a relationship that is seri-

ous and potentially destructive to a relationship, then it must be addressed. I am referring here to the normal human imperfections that occur in every person and in every relationship.

When I asked people around our office today what advice they would share with any couple getting married this summer so as to avoid letting too much crab grass grow in their relationship, the most common advice was to manage one's expectation of one's partner or spouse. This certainly rings true for lot of people I speak with, both personally and professionally, and it is related to managing perfectionist tendencies. Anyone can easily wear out a partner, spouse, friend, or coworker with unrealistic expectations.

Weeds will always appear from time to time, both in lawns and in relationships. Knowing the difference between the weeds that are a normal part of every relationship and the weeds that are potentially destructive is key to creating and maintaining a healthy relationship. In addition, choosing to regularly focus our attention on what we love about a partner, spouse, or friend will grow both our love for him or her, as well as create a surplus of goodwill in our relationship. Just as grass needs water to stay green and growing and to crowd out the weeds, relationships, too, stay green and growing when they are watered regularly with love and positive attention.

(6)



## Learn Empathy by Playing!

By: Sheri Fluellen

Three fun games to help your little ones learn empathy

1. Make faces and have them guess your emotion. Then have them make faces and you guess their emotion. You can start with simple emotions that are easily recognizable, such as sad, mad, happy, surprised, and scared.
2. When reading books, ask your child what some of the book characters might be feeling (either based on the pictures in the book or the content of the story)
3. Have your child make as many different type of emotional faces as he or she can think of and take pictures of each and let the child see them or take video of your child doing it. Kids are fascinated by pictures and videos of themselves!



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