

Parents/Carers in Play Therapy sessions

For children to make use of Play Therapy, they need to feel safe enough to explore and experiment. Sometimes this means that they need a parent or carer to stay with them in the playroom.

This can feel very strange, as the rules and interactions of Play Therapy are very different from other situations.

Here are some of the principles of Play Therapy, and guidelines for supporting your child in their sessions.

Play Therapy is child-led: We encourage you to sit quietly and observe your child's play. If they do ask you to join in, think of yourself as a 'prop': follow your child's instructions and let them show you how they need you to play.

Non-judgemental: We work hard not to express any judgement of children's choices in play therapy, whether positive or negative. If your child asks what you think of something they have done or made, you can reflect this back (eg 'you're wondering what I think'), or notice how they feel (eg 'you're really proud'). If in doubt, let the therapist guide you!

Limit setting: In the Play Therapy room there is no 'good' or 'bad' behaviour, and the limits are likely to be different from those at home. If you can, try to relax and allow the therapist to set limits when they are needed.

Building self esteem: We ask you not to offer help to your child during Play Therapy. This is an opportunity for them to develop their own resilience and problem-solving skills, as well as experiencing some frustration in a safe setting. If your child asks you for help with something, encourage them to find their own solution (eg 'I think you can figure it out') or allow the therapist to lead.

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Parents in Play Therapy sessions (continued)

Accepting feelings: Play Therapy is an opportunity for children to experience and process a full range of emotions. It can be difficult to sit with a child's anger, sadness or fear, particularly when this seems 'silly' or irrational, but therapists are trained to recognise and acknowledge these feelings and to help children to gain control over them.

Not just play: Play is a child's natural way of learning about the world and about themselves, and when they feel safe and relaxed, they will play spontaneously. However, not all children play all the time in Play Therapy. If your child needs to sit quietly for a while, or come to you for a cuddle, or argue with the therapist about limits - that's OK. This is all part of the therapy and doesn't need to be rushed.



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