



APAC's Approach to Play Therapy

We call the time spent by our therapists with children **Therapeutic Play**.

Therapeutic Play is:

- Non Judgmental
- Non Directive
- Non Interpretative

Play is essential for children to develop physically, emotionally and socially. It fosters imagination and creativity and encourages confidence and concentration. It helps children to make friends and learn about their ever-expanding world. It allows them to learn from mistakes safely. **Therapeutic Play** enables children to consider and acknowledge their feelings. It helps them to learn that it is OK to feel, and teaches them how to cope with feelings in a safe and constructive way.

Play therapy is used for:

- Emotional/behavioural problems
- Communication problems/autism
- Delayed language/play development
- Social integration
- Enhancing parental/carer child interaction
- Ongoing assessment

Our **Play Therapy approach** is based upon the theories of Virginia Axline, Carl Rogers, Margaret Lowenfeld and Rachel Pinney. Their theories postulate that children are able, from a very early age, to make choices and take responsibilities in line with their age and ability. If this ability is fostered, the child becomes happier, more fulfilled and confident. A happy child is better able to grow and accept the reasonable authority of those in charge of him or her and to take initiative.

Very few children have real freedom to play without constraint. Play therapy techniques allow a child complete freedom of choice within safe boundaries. The child is set free from the responsibility for taking care of itself; Safety for the child, the environment and themselves are now the provinces of the therapist during **Therapeutic Play**. The child is neither praised nor blamed.

There is no judgement, no right or wrong. By providing a free atmosphere within safe boundaries the adult allows the child complete freedom to express him or herself verbally, physically or with playthings.



The use of unconstructed materials such as sand and water, paint, glue, clay etc as well as miniature figures of people, animals, trees etc is important to allow the imagination free rein. Making a world in the sand, for instance, gives a child the opportunity of making sense of his or her experience and gaining some control over his or her world in which adults appear so powerful and sometimes threatening.

During **Therapeutic Play** the child will develop strategies of how to deal with situations in the real world more appropriately.