

Child Centred Play Therapy

What is Child Centred Play Therapy?

Child Centred Play Therapy (CCPT) is a means of creating a therapeutic relationship between an adult and a child in which the child uses play to communicate. CCPT allows a child to use play to express what is troubling them in a safe, contained environment. CCPT is for children aged up to 12-13 years of age. CCPT aims to create space for a child to make sense of their experiences and develop their self-awareness and self-concept.

Common Outcomes of CCPT:

- Increased understanding of past experiences
- Increased understanding of self
- Improved social skills
- Improved emotional awareness and understanding
- Improved emotional and behavioural regulation

"In CCPT, with the [play therapist's] attentive tracking and empathic responses, children work all the way through such repetitive, unproductive loops to reach new understandings of their experience, and new decisions of who they want to be and how they want to behave."

(Cochran & Nordlin et al., 2010)

Stages of Play Therapy:

- **Warm Up/Exploration (1-3 sessions):** In this stage of play the child orients themselves to the playroom, develops trust that the therapist values them, and tests limits. The child will not explore issues in this stage.
- **Aggressive (10-20+ sessions):** It is in this stage of play that the child feels safe enough, trusts in the therapist's positive regard for them, and feels comfort in the permissiveness of the playroom that they will begin to explore their issues to work through.
- **Regressive (5-10+ sessions):** In this stage the child has worked through their issues and now they work broadly on issues related to relationship and attachment where they will begin to view relationships as nurturing and protective and themselves as likeable and loveable.
- **Mastery (3-5+ sessions):** This stage of play is the natural ending to the work the child has been doing, it is where the positive changes the child has made integrates into their personality structure and where they can develop a sense of competency.

What to Expect/How to Help:

- The child will go through the stages of play at their own pace,
- Children may be slightly irritable or dysregulated after some sessions, allow them space to regulate before expecting them to engage in challenging tasks,
- Behaviours/challenges may get worse before they get better as the child works through their experiences,
- Never ask the child how the session was or what they did in the Play Room, they will share with you what they did if they choose.

