



Play Therapy

Supporting vulnerable children, young people & their families/carers

What is Clinical Play Therapy?

Clinical Play Therapy is an effective, evidence-based therapy that helps vulnerable individuals

learn positive behaviour patterns, clarify their self esteem & self-concept, work through negative emotional issues, & build healthy relationships. In Clinical Play Therapy, vulnerable individuals enter into a dynamic relationship with the therapist that enables them to express, explore & make sense of their difficult & painful experiences. Clinical Play Therapy helps clients find healthier ways of communicating, develop fulfilling relationships, increase resiliency & facilitates emotional literacy.

Most clients referred to Clinical Play Therapy do not have the words to describe their thoughts, feelings & perceptions, or the issues that are causing them problems. Clinical Play Therapy empowers the client to communicate & resolve these issues.

A Clinical Play Therapist is fully trained in Applied & Health Psychologies, in order to support the client in an integrative & ecological based framework, ie:

- community based
- family centred
- culturally aware
- includes peer learning situations
- offers support in the school setting
- creates a framework of core professionals working as an effective team to support each client's needs



Clinical Play Therapists specialise in the use of schema & play patterns to support clients learn positive behaviour, to integrate successfully within their family, school & peer settings & to fulfil their highest potential.

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Schemas & play patterns

Supporting new knowledge & understanding



Schemas are cognitive structures or forms of thought. Patterns in client's play behaviour, or in their drawings & paintings, indicate common themes or threads running through them demonstrating the client's range of schema. Clinical Play Therapists hold a complete diagnostic understanding of schema - they are able to look at these patterns & analyse them, in order to support each client's development & learning . They work to support clients who are showing Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMS) into a more adaptive schema framework. This work is based upon the Cognitive-Behaviourist psychological approach.

An early maladaptive schema can be defined as:

*A broad pervasive theme or pattern regarding oneself & one's relationship with others, developed during childhood & elaborated throughout one's lifetime, & dysfunctional to a significant degree.*¹



Schemas are extremely stable & enduring patterns, comprising of memories, bodily sensations, emotions, cognitions. If clients hold maladaptive schemas, these can trigger negative behaviour & emotional issues, leading clients to being unable to assimilate new information from the world around them. For example - when a child has an EMS like abandonment, they have all the memories of early abandonment, the emotions of anxiety or depression which are attached to abandonment, bodily sensations & thoughts that people are going to leave them. An Early Maladaptive Schema, therefore, is at the deepest level of cognition & contains memories & intense emotions when activated, leading to behavioural & emotional issues in a child.



¹National Institute of Clinical Excellence (2009).

Emotional Intelligence

Emotions are powerful biological forces, motivating our active engagement in life. Emotions may interfere with or undermine the ability of a child or young person to fulfil their true potential. Clinical Play Therapy sessions are designed to consolidate & support emotional intelligence, empowering effective & successful patterns of behaviour for personal happiness.

Emotional Intelligence (EI), often measured as an Emotional Intelligence Quotient (EQ), describes an ability, capacity, or skill to perceive, assess, & manage the emotions of one's self, of others, & of groups.

Psychologist Daniel Goleman outlines Emotional Intelligence as:

1. Knowing one's emotions
2. Managing emotions
3. Motivating oneself
4. Recognizing emotions in others
5. Handling relationships

Goleman's work & research emphasises how crucial emotional & relationship abilities are within the "rough & tumble" of life, & the need to help support children & young people in learning Emotional Intelligence, so they feel capable & happy individuals - enabling a positive family, school & social life. Many schools are now implementing the EI curriculum based upon Goleman's work – the Social & Emotional Aspect of Development (SEAD, for 0 – 3 years) & the Social & Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL). Clinical Play Therapy builds on this work, but offers more targeted & specialist support.



[Why Play Therapy?](#)

Families & carers are often attempting to cope with children/young people with emotional & behavioural issues, such as: stress & anxiety; hyperactivity; sleep & toilet issues; low confidence; social issues, such as a lack of friends; poor communication, frustration & anger; fixated routines that limit the ability for new routines to be established or for new experiences to occur. Clinical Play Therapy helps vulnerable individuals to work through behavioural & emotional issues in order for them to learn more adaptive & positive behaviour patterns. Clinical Play Therapy removes these types of barriers to learning & development, so that each child or young person can fulfil their full potential.

Play Therapy can support each vulnerable individual to:

1. Build healthier relationships with family, school & peers;
2. Reduce emotional, behavioural & social obstacles to learning & development;
3. Improve adaptation to life experiences;
4. Enhance communication skills & emotional literacy;
5. Address their specific needs;
6. Access further support from linked professionals. For example, the play therapist will support & advise parents & school.



How Play Therapy works:

Play Therapy follows a standard procedure, & is an evidence based therapy. This includes:

1. Consultation with parent/carer;
2. Initial Assessment of the client;
3. Cycle of Play Therapy Sessions;
4. Regular review sessions with the client , parents/carers & relevant professionals
5. Ending of Play Therapy cycle. Final evidence-based assessment reports, ending preparation with clients, families/ carers & professionals. Consolidation of new resilient behaviour patterns.

Clinical Play Therapy requires parents/carers to be involved in the Play Therapy process. The Play Therapist will need to hold regular meetings with parents/carers in order to review the Play Therapy process & to collate information about the client's circumstances.

Play Therapy is underpinned by Applied & Health Psychologies, & uses the creative arts & play to engage children, young people & families in therapy. Creative arts & play are the natural medium for expression within each session, demonstrating to the Play Therapist the schemas the client holds. Clinical Play Therapists hold a full diagnostic understanding of adaptive & maladaptive schemas, & are able to look at these patterns & analyse the client's schema in order to support their emotional health & wellbeing.

What to do next to book Play Therapy for your child

Please contact the clinic at the following email address: clinic@euphelia.com

A Clinical Play Therapist will contact you to arrange your initial consultancy session, to discuss your needs. There is a standard charge for this initial meeting.