

## Play Therapy–What’s That?!

We use play therapy as a means of dealing with children’s problems, because play is the primary way that children...

- Express themselves
- Understand how things work
- Develop new mental skills
- Develop social skills and bonds

By watching children play, we often learn more about their thoughts, feelings, motivations and struggles than by talking with them! Play has been called the “language of childhood”, and if we work with that language, we can build more satisfying relationships with children.

Many of us have seen television nature programs which show animals babies playing with each other or their mothers, as they develop their hunting and survival skills. Scientists generally agree that play fosters healthy development of young and adult animals alike. The same is true for human children and adults. Playfulness and humor are closely associated with mental health, intellectual development, creativity and problem-solving, and even productivity on the job! Although we sometimes think of play as trivial, in actuality it is one of the strongest supports for healthy adjustment, learning and productive activity.

One of the benefits of play therapy is that it creates a safe atmosphere in which children can express themselves, try new things, learn more about how the world works and the restrictions it imposes, and work through their problems. Play therapy gives children an opportunity to explore and open up more than usual.

Healing Works differs from some play therapy styles in that we encourage parental involvement in the session whenever possible. Traditional play therapy does not invite the parent into the room, and for some children, this is best. Usually, however, we find that the whole family needs help to work together and that family play therapy sessions allow the child to express secret feelings or worries that have been a barrier to good communication. Please let us decide what will work best for your child. We value your input regarding YOUR child and will always include you in treatment.

Adapted with permission from a handout used by Brownback, Mason and Associates, P.C.