

# PLAY THERAPY ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

*Different tools. Same purpose. Lasting impact.*

Play therapy isn't just for little kids. It's a developmentally responsive approach that helps people express, process, and heal through connection, creativity, and safe emotional exploration—at every age.

## PLAY THERAPY HEALS AT EVERY AGE



### YOUNG CHILDREN

*Birth to early elementary*

Young children naturally communicate through play. Research shows play therapy can help with:

- ♥ Emotional regulation
- ♥ Behavior challenges
- ♥ Trauma & stress
- ♥ Social skills & relationships



#### PLAY IS THEIR LANGUAGE.

Play helps young children feel safe, express big feelings, and build skills they need for life.



### TEENAGERS

*Adolescence is a time of identity, change, and big emotions.*

Play-based approaches meet teens where they are—creative, collaborative, and expressive. Benefits include:

- ♥ Emotional expression
- ♥ Identity & self-awareness
- ♥ Stress, anxiety & depression
- ♥ Healthy coping & relationships



#### PLAY HELPS TEENS EXPRESS WHAT WORDS CAN'T ALWAYS SAY.

Creative and playful experiences can open the door to connection, insight, and resilience.



### ADULTS

*Adults continue to benefit from play, creativity, and experiential healing.*

Play-based approaches can support:

- ♥ Processing trauma & stress
- ♥ Emotional regulation
- ♥ Creativity & problem-solving
- ♥ Personal growth & connection



#### PLAY IS A POWERFUL PATH TO HEALING AT ANY AGE.

It helps access deeper experiences in ways that feel safe, meaningful, and transformative.



### WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

- ✓ Strong evidence supports Child-Centered Play Therapy (CCPT) for children ages 3–12, improving behavior, emotional well-being, relationships, and more.
- ✓ Research shows positive outcomes for preschoolers (ages 3–5), including improved social skills and reduced behavior concerns.
- ✓ Growing evidence supports play-based approaches for teens, including benefits for depression, trauma, and emotional regulation.
- ✓ Studies of sandplay/sandtray therapy show positive results for both adolescents and adults across a range of concerns, including trauma, anxiety, and stress.



The strongest evidence base is with children, but research is growing and promising for teens and adults.

### HOW PLAY THERAPY HELPS



#### SUPPORTS THE NERVOUS SYSTEM:

Play-based experiences help reduce stress and promote emotional regulation.



#### ENCOURAGES EXPRESSION:

Play, creativity, and symbolism help people express what's hard to put into words.



#### BUILDS CONNECTION:

Play strengthens relationships, trust, and a sense of safety.



#### PROMOTES GROWTH & RESILIENCE:

Play helps people make sense of experiences, solve problems, and move forward.

### TIPS FOR PARENTS



#### BE OPEN

Play therapy is a research-supported, effective approach for many emotional and behavioral challenges.



#### TRUST THE PROCESS

Therapy may look like play, but it is intentional, guided, and designed to help your child or teen heal and grow.



#### COLLABORATE

Stay connected with your therapist and ask questions. You're an important part of the journey.



#### FOCUS ON PROGRESS

Small changes add up. Celebrate growth, however big or small.



#### TAKE CARE OF YOU

Your well-being supports your child, teen, and the whole family.

