

Playful Times

MD/DC APT NEWSLETTER

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PLAYFUL TIMES



ISSUE 8



President's Message

Dear MD/DC Play Therapists,

Well we made it through another successful National Play Therapy Week! Thank you to those of you who were able to join us at Coffee Republic in celebration of Play Therapy week. We enjoyed chatting with you and learning about your passion for play therapy. Be sure to check out some of our pictures from last week's event at the end of the newsletter. It was truly wonderful to hear all your stories. In fact, we really want to network with all of you a lot more! Throughout the year, we host happy hours, awareness walks, and coffee hours in the Baltimore and DC metro areas. Please email our Networking Coordinator, Lora Wolz, LCSW -C, RPT for ideas on how and where you would like to connect with your local play therapy colleagues at lwolz310@comcast.net. We would love to hear from all areas of our Chapter. Going forward, we are going to be featuring play therapists in each of our newsletters under the member spotlight section. In this edition, you will meet two of our highly regarded members Beth Hartstein, LCSW-C, RPT and Mimi Ryans, LICSW, LCSW-C, RPT. Please send your photos and bios for inclusion in future newsletters to our Newsletter Editor, William McNulty, LCSW-C, RPT-S at williammcnulty@cswe.com.

A special thank you goes out to our cherished members, Xanthia Johnson, LPC, ACS, RPT-S of Urban Playology and Sonia Hinds, APRN/PMH-BC, RPT-S of Chesapeake Beach Professional Seminars who wrote the articles in this newsletter in honor of African-American/Black History Month. Thank you both for your beautiful words, outstanding contributions in addressing cultural issues, and embracing diversity in play therapy.

I'm proud to announce some exciting training announcements. First off, this year we have become our very own own APT and NASW Continuing Education Provider. We want to thank NIRE for their many years of support and co-sponsorship in handling our continuing education. Be sure to check their website for top notch training opportunities at www.nire.org. With so many rich and diverse play therapy training opportunities being offered at NIRE, Chesapeake Beach Professional Seminars, and now Next Place Therapy Services, play therapy training in the Maryland/DC area is flourishing!

We are really excited to inform you that The MD/DC APT has partnered with Metropolitan Behavioral Health Services and will be providing play therapy training in Prince George's County this year. If you would like to submit a presentation proposal, please do so by emailing our Training Coordinator, Judy Wang, LCPC, RPT at thejudywang@yahoo.com.

We hope to see you on March 3rd in Towson, MD for our CBPS co-sponsored training entitled, *Crisis Intervention Play Therapy with Children & Families after Natural Disasters and & Other Traumatic Events*. With all the terrible events that occur in our world, including the recent tragedy in Florida, this training is essential to our play therapy practice.

Lastly, please save the date for our MD/DC APT Annual Spring Workshop in Bethesda, MD on Saturday, May 5th entitled, *Use of Digital Tools in the Play Therapy Process* with Rachel Altwater, Psy.D., RPT and Jessica Stone, Ph.D., RPT-S. It's going to be so much fun!

On behalf of the MD/DC APT Board, we look forward to connecting, expanding, and strengthening our play therapy community with you this year! Bring on the sunshine!

Playfully Yours,

Niki Picogna, Psy.D, LCPC, RPT-S



**Niki Picogna Psy.D.,
LCPC, RPT-S MD/DC APT
President**

Members Spotlight



Y. Mimi Ryans, LCSW-C, RPT-S, CCTP is the owner of Lighthouse Center for Therapy & Play, LLC located in Columbia, MD. Mimi has extensive experience working with children and families and has, for the last four years, owned and operated an insurance-based private group practice.

Her initial clinical work involved being the Intensive Outpatient Coordinator, working with dual-diagnosed adolescents and their families. As an employee of a foster care agency and then a therapeutic in-home program in Washington, DC, Mimi worked as a child welfare social worker and in-home therapist with children, adolescents, and adults.

Mimi has been involved with providing and integrating play therapy interventions in school settings including HeadStart classrooms and Early Childhood centers. She has completed training and is credentialed with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) in Social Emotional Foundations of Early Learning (SEFEL)

and a Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Trainer for both adults and children.

Mimi received her Bachelor's in Business Administration (BBA) from the University of Memphis, Master's in Business Administration (MBA) from Christian Brothers University and her Master's in Social Work (MSW) from Howard University.



Before I even completed my license, I wanted a specialization, excited to find my niche in the field. My two interests were play therapy and personality disorders. After much consideration, play therapy won... and I am ever so glad! The kids who come to therapy can't believe my office is a playroom (and so is my car)! I was mostly through completing my play therapy credentials by the time I got my license so I began immediately.

The rest is history! I love what I do and threw myself into my work wholeheartedly, making up techniques in sessions as they applied and began training others within the year, spreading the language of play with clinicians and parents!

Beth Hartstein is an LCSW-C and RPT currently working in a group private practice in Pikesville.

Behind The Movement, Film Therapy In the Play Therapy Room

Behind The Movement, Film Therapy In the Play Therapy Room by Xanthia Johnson LPC, ACS, RPT-S

Behind The Movement is a critically acclaimed, award-winning TV movie that aired in February of this year. It hallmarks the pivotal day in Black History when activist Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white man. Her courageous stand set in motion a series of events that would change the course of history forever. The Civil Rights Movement of the 60's was undoubtedly sparked with electricity because of Rosa Parks.

When Parks was alive, she talked about that day that changed her life. She shared earnestly about the fact that she had not planned to become an activist. She was exhausted after a long day's work and could no longer bear the humiliation of giving up her seat to white people anymore. That day she was willing to face the inevitable and unknown consequences of standing up for herself. Regarding that day she reflected that:, "Unfortunately, change doesn't come without risk."

As an African American play therapist working with culturally diverse clients of all ages, I do observe the parallels. Clients take the risk of letting us help them through life's difficulties. While I routinely fuse media therapy into the work with clients, I am particularly compelled to introduce specific cultural content such as what we represented in Behind The Movement.

Use of Current Day Media in Play Therapy

What if we were to use appropriate clips from Behind The Movement in the play therapy room? For whom might such an intervention be most appropriate? How would we fuse it into play therapy treatment? Are there instances for which it would not be appropriate or useful?

Film therapy, also known as movie or cinema therapy differs from bibliotherapy, which fuses the exploration of relevant therapeutic content in books. It is important to note that while some utilize film to escape **from** life's realities, others may benefit from escaping to real depictions of life's realities. Film therapy allows clients **to** have a media viewing experience in the play therapy room followed by verbal processing or play processing. Sandtray therapy and art-making are also interventions for processing media.

Behind The Movement, Film Therapy In the Play Therapy Room: Continued

These are a few considerations that we, as play therapists, might explore this.

A few reasons for the use of current day media in the playroom are:

Validation-When we fuse media into play therapy, we likely validate the client's experiences. Appropriate and intentional clips from films like Behind The Movement help validate traumatic experiences that clients may come to us with. It provides a pathway to the content, context, and complexities of the human experience across the lifespan. I'm wondering if anything like this has happened to you or someone you know? How did you feel? How did they feel? I'm wondering what you did, how you handled it. I'm curious about what the other people who were involved did, how they handled it. In this way of guided exploration with clients, we, as play therapists, validate their experiences. We demonstrate an openness and willingness to bear witness to their stories. These positive overtures improve therapeutic rapport.

Visibility-Clients across the lifespan should feel seen by us, as play therapists. We can show them that we really see them, that we want to see them. Intentionally sharing current day media in the play therapy room does that. It lets them know that we intentionally prepare for our time with them. It lets them know that we care about what's happening in their communities. I have found this to be the case with all clients, particularly clients of color.

Voice-Sharing appropriate clips from films like Behind The Movement can help clients feel heard by us, as play therapists. We give voice to their experiences. With other galvanizing movements like Me too, Time's Up, and Black Lives Matter, clients across the lifespan may appreciate additional opportunities to talk and play about important social issues that impact their lives. I have found this to be the case with all clients, particularly clients of color.

4 Steps for Fusing Media into the Play Therapy

With foundational context for why we might fuse film therapy into our play therapy practice, there are 4 intentional steps for how to do this.

Step 1-Play therapy supervision-The first step in fusing media into the play therapy treatment is play therapy supervision. We don't have to figure this fusion out alone. This is an important preparatory measure because it allows us to explore the appropriateness of using films like Behind The Movement with the trained support of a play therapist supervisor.

Step 2-Assessment of Client's Readiness or Openness. We can talk with clients about the prospect of fusing media into the play therapy work. We can let them weigh in about if they think it could augment their experience with us. Again, across the life span, we can collaboratively explore client openness to this possibility.

Movement, Film Therapy In the Play Therapy Room: Continued

Step 3-Technology Ready. If we do decide to fuse media like Behind the Movement, we need ensure that our technology is reliable and wii-fii ready. Imagine prepping the client for the film therapy in previous sessions, with unreliable technology. Although we can process such mishaps directly with clients, they can be avoided with adequate preparation of viewing materials i.e. laptop, clip readiness, etc.

Step 4-Let'sThink Globally-If its not Behind the Movement in a play therapy session, perhaps we explore with clients what their experience of viewing Black Panther, another trending Black History Month film, was like. Black Panther, released on President's Day weekend, hallmarks the first black superhero in a major feature film. The cast is also all black. Maybe we wait for clients to share or maybe we make a direct inquiry about their cultural experiences outside the play therapy room. Our approach to this step depends on what we know of the client.

Be it with young or clients who are young at heart, the universal applications of film therapy and media therapy are far- reaching. Imagine parent-child dyads, multiple member families, individual adult clients, or individual child clients and the possible benefits to their play therapy treatment.

Final Reflections

This African American play therapist was once a young black girl. I was raised in the South, as were my parents. My parents were present in Selma during the Civil Rights Movement. Much of my moral and emotional tapestry is impacted by my parents' vivid lives during that time. Like my parents, I remember the people in my life who really saw me, who really heard me when I was a child. Young black children always remember the people in their lives who really see and hear them. Let us remember that all young people become adults and they always remember the people in their lives who've really seen them and heard them. As play therapists, we have the privilege of seeing and hearing our clients. I am grateful to the Freedom Fighters like Rosa Parks who made the way for people like me to have visibility and voice.

Please feel free to offer constructive queries or musings about this article. Would love to hear from you!



Xanthia Johnson Owner/Psychotherapist, Urban Playology, LLC

Xanthia Johnson is a licensed psychotherapist and play therapist supervisor in DC. Her private practice is Urban Playology LLC, located in Dupont Circle. She has over a decade of experience healing hearts and she adores this work.

DANCING WITH AN AFRICAN CHILD TO THE TUNE OF CHILD-CENTERED PLAY THERAPY

DANCING WITH AN AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILD TO THE TUNE OF CHILD-CENTERED PLAY THERAPY

Sonia Hinds, APRN, PMH-BC, RPT-S

**” If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head.
If you talk to him in HIS language, that goes to his heart.”
Nelson Mandela**

With children, play and culture are inseparable. Sonia Hinds

From the beginning, four senses were immediately activated by the therapist to carefully observe and coach the parent during the session. Observed was a host of ethnic and culturally based factors that came into play between a conservative Caucasian caregiver and an African American child. This session was especially healing because of the carefully choreographed dance between a child and an adult from two diverse cultures.

Themes noted during the session were race, gender, social class, a wide gap in age, choice of music, abandonment, deprivation and attachment issues. The child led as the caregiver followed without interrupting the process with questions, inserting views or directing the play in any way.

It was heart-warming to see the caregiver make a genuine effort to adapt to the music that was not part of her generation. The caregiver imitated some of the dance moves at the invitation of the child. After mindful observation and processing of the session, the valuable child-centered play therapy lessons taught by Drs. Garry Landreth, William Nordling and mentoring from Margert Drury, now retired were much appreciated.

Of the eight Axline’s Basic Principles of Non-Directive or Child-Centered Play Therapy, the following were evident during the session. The therapists:

1. ***Accepts the child as is***
There was no judgement regarding the child’s plight and how it was played-out
2. ***Establishes feeling of permission. Child allowed self-expression
Only those limits necessary to anchor the therapy are used***

Sand was the medium the child chose to do the work. A limit was not needed since the sand was reasonably contained. The music chosen was common in the child’s culture, and used probably as a way to bridge the two generations. Even though profanity is a common part of the music genre, the child chose not to include it, perhaps out of respect.

3. ***Does not attempt to direct the child’s actions or conversations in any manner***

The child began talking about personal traumatic experiences without being questioned. The caregiver allowed the child to lead, listened intently, and did not act surprised nor attempted to direct the conversation.

The role the therapist during this session was to model responses for the caregiver, by reflecting content, feelings, and using empathy.

In addition to providing insight through therapeutic responses, cultural competence is a critical part of the process. In the text, "Cultural Issues in Play Therapy", edited by Drs. Eliana Gil and Athena Drewes, is featured a chapter entitled, "Play Therapy in the African American Village", where listed are "Ten Qualities of Culturally Competent Therapists". What follows are examples of how three of the ten principles were displayed throughout the session.

Understand experiences from a culturally sensitive and historical perspective

An awareness and understanding of the plight of African Americans is needed. In particular, it should be noted that Black children, especially boys are faced with racism on a daily basis, and are often feared by Caucasian women. To observe an African American child with a Caucasian woman side by side in play with enjoyment, free of fear or reservation was pure joy.

Look for themes embedded in the cultural experience such as hopelessness, mistrust, loss, anger, poor attachment, deprivation and abandonment.

Themes of abandonment and deprivation were displayed in the child's play and were well recognized by the caregiver, as evidenced by verbal and non-verbal responses. In the session, the child was treated with honor, respect and appreciation rather than pity.

Don't try to imitate the mannerisms, just be yourself.

During the session, music and dance moves were initiated by the child. The caregiver was invited to join the dance, and did so without making fun of or mocking the child.

The caregiver did an excellent job at following the child's lead and got a well-deserved thumbs up from the therapist. According to Dr. Landreth, when child-centered play therapy principles are implemented, the therapist communicates through the experience, "I am here, I hear you, I understand, I care."

It is the opinion of the author that every clinician conducting play therapy, either non-directive or directive must be well trained in child-centered play therapy. In addition to child-centered play therapy, cultural competence which includes the ability to interact with people of different cultures with flexibility and respect is imperative. Further, to remain culturally competent, there needs to be a continual commitment to learning.

Permission granted by caregiver for publication for educational purposes.



Sonia Hinds is a licensed nurse-psychotherapist, founder and director of Chesapeake Beach Professional Seminars, which offers 150 hours of intensive play therapy training, a fast track to becoming a Registered Play Therapist. Ms. Hinds is the author of "Play Therapy in the African American Village" in the text, Cultural Issues in Play Therapy, edited by Drs. Eliana Gil and Athena Drewes. Guilford Press, 2005.

MDDC APT Out and About

Play Therapy Week Coffee Hour at Coffee Republic in Rockville MD on 2/10/18.





Next Place Therapy is excited to now offer Play Therapy Workshops!

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Sabra Starnes, LICSW, LCSW-C, M.Ed, RPT-S, CEO

Contact for upcoming Play Therapy Workshops

E: nptgroups@gmail.com

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Employment opportunity

Metropolitan Behavioral Health Services located in Lanham, MD is looking to hire licensed therapists who have experience working in child play therapy. For more details, please contact their office at [301-851-5954](tel:301-851-5954) or log onto their website, mbhshelps.org

Save the date:

What: Use of Digital Tools in the Play Therapy Room with Jessica Stone, PhD., RPT-S and Rachael Altvater, PsyD., LCPC, RPT

When: Saturday, May 5th from 8:30am till 4:30pm.

Where: Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Service Center
4805 Edgemoor Lane