

Dream Catcher Play & Creative Arts Therapy

What is Play & Creative Arts Therapy?

When children are experiencing big emotions they are finding hard to manage, they are often unable to explain with words exactly how they are feeling. This can lead to further frustration and distress for both the child and the adults around them. Using creative mediums such as play, art, storytelling, music and movement, children are able to play out past or current events in a way that developmentally makes sense to them. They are able to see their concerns more clearly, which offers relief in the same way adults can when 'talking through' their issues.

The therapist provides a warm and non-judgemental relationship and is able to 'hold' challenging feelings and thoughts so the child feels accepted and can safely explore these to find strategies to move forward.

Who is Play & Creative Arts therapy for?

This effective therapy supports a wide variety of issues. It can support children and young people from 4 -14 years who are struggling with any of the following issues:

Emotional

Anxiety

Low self esteem

Difficulties with regulation

Peer difficulties

Low resilience

Behavioural

Aggression

Withdrawn

Inattentive

Antisocial behaviour

Environmental

Family breakdown

Bullying

Bereavement

Abuse

Trauma

How many sessions are required?

Play & Creative Arts Therapy sessions are conducted one to one, once a week, at the same time and place and typically last 45 minutes (depending on the child's age and developmental level). At the time of referral, a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) assessment tool will be used to understand the issues the child is experiencing and to advise a suitable length of intervention. For mild to moderate concerns, the minimum number of sessions is 12. For problems that have persisted for a long time or are complex, a longer length such as 20+ sessions may be recommended.

What is a Play Therapist?

Play Therapists must hold a Post Graduate Diploma in Play Therapy and be a current member of PTUK or BAPT (the professional play therapy bodies recognised by the Government's Professional Standards Authority). Play therapists' receive extensive training in child development, neuroscience and attachment theory. In addition we learn how to develop a trusting therapeutic relationship with our client in a child-led way. We are trained to use play, a child's natural form of expression, as a means for understanding and communicating with children about feelings, thoughts and behaviour.

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What happens in the Play & Creative Arts Therapy sessions?

The child will be given the opportunity to use a selection of play and arts materials with three rules: 1) neither the therapist or child will physically hurt each other, 2) the child will not (on purpose) break or damage the materials or room, 3) if the child discloses that someone is hurting them, or they are hurting someone else - then the therapist will have to report this (following Dream Catcher's Safeguarding Policy). The child will be supported to express themselves without having to provide verbal explanations.

In addition to play, the therapist may offer: art materials, creative visualisations, puppets & masks, sandtray & clay, storytelling, movement and music, small world symbols and drama.

What is the adults involvement in the process?

The parents/carers and teaching staff are extremely important to the success of the process. The following are useful to follow throughout the therapy: 1) be consistent and encouraging to your child about attending sessions regularly, 2) resist the urge to ask your child what they did, as this will put pressure on them to comment on something they may have difficulty understanding themselves, 3) please don't ask your child to 'be good'. Therapy is not about being 'good' or 'bad', 4) during any therapeutic intervention behaviour may appear to get worse before it gets better.*

*advice provided by BAPT

What is the evidence that Play & Creative Arts Therapy works?

Recognised assessment tools are used to monitor progress such as SDQs, in addition to the requested goals from parents/carers/school. Play Therapy UK data* shows that between 74% and 83% of children receiving play therapy, delivered to PTUK standards, show a positive change. To date**, Claire Twomey's results shows that between 85% and 93% of children show a positive change on the total difficulties score.

* 2011 data **2016 to 2019 data

