



Generally Speaking...

- Play therapy is a developmentally appropriate form of therapy for children. It allows them to grow and heal in the way that is most natural for them.
- Children have *confidentiality*, just like adults. I will only share general information, but will otherwise work with you and involve you as much as possible.
- Your child will not be asked to clean up. Because play is a child's language, asking them to clean up afterward would be the same as asking an adult to take back everything he or she said in therapy. Note: Play therapy is a unique situation, and I do not necessarily advocate this otherwise.
- After school appointments are usually the busiest time of day for me. If you have an appointment after school, I ask that you respect that time and communicate with me if you can't make it.
- Please keep in mind that if you are late for an appointment, we will still be ending at the same time.
- If something special comes up that is very important to your child (such as an extracurricular event or a visit from a beloved relative), don't feel guilty about making those things a priority. Consult with me and use your best judgment. Therapy is important, but it's often not helpful for therapy to interfere with things that help your child grow or heal.

Introducing Therapy

- If your child has questions about the reason he or she is coming to play therapy, you can say something like: "Sometimes when kids are having a hard time, they go play with someone who tries to help them feel better." Saying that they are coming to therapy because they are bad or because something is wrong with them will make therapy less effective.
- A lot of children feel anxious during their first appointment. If your child seems to be having a hard time, I may invite you to walk them back or to come sit in the play room for a few minutes. If this happens, I ask that you watch quietly. I will signal you when it seems like a good time for you to slip out of the room.

Parent Consults

- YOU are an important part of therapy, too. Let me know if you have any ideas about how we can best work together.
- We will generally schedule parent consults after every four play therapy sessions. If something comes up and you need to talk sooner, please let me know. I can usually be flexible with this.

Your Responsibilities

- I will need updated information about custody arrangements. Please let me know as soon as any changes are made.
- Please keep in mind that it is your responsibility to inform me of any allergies your child has.
- In therapy, your child will have the freedom to express their emotional reality in whatever way they need to (within appropriate boundaries to keep them safe). Because of this, play therapy can be messy. Please bring your children to sessions in clothes that you wouldn't mind getting dirty.
- I understand that sometimes important things happen that you want me to know about. I ask that you do not share your concerns or frustrations with me in front of your child. You are always welcome to call or e-mail me when something comes up. If necessary, you can also hand me a note before the session.

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

The best way to handle things...

...before a session:

- For young children, please take them to use the restroom before the session begins.
- If you're coming after school, it's helpful to make sure your children have a snack.
- Please remember to have clothing for your children to wear that you do not mind getting dirty.
- This is your child's special time, and they get to decide how they use it. Please refrain from saying things like "Be good!" or "Remember to talk about _____," because this may keep them from doing what is really important for their growth.

...during a session:

- I will need you (or another trusted adult who can be responsible for your child) to stay in the waiting room during the session. This helps provide a feeling of safety and comfort for your child. Also, there may be situations when we need to finish a session early.
- Sometimes, a child may be loud or messy during a session. This is perfectly normal and okay. Sometimes children need to be loud to process their emotions, and play therapy is a safe place for them to do so.

...after a session:

- Please refrain from asking your child any questions about their session (such as "Did you have fun?" or "What did you do?"). This is one way you can respect your child's confidentiality, which helps therapy work better. It's important for them to know that they have the freedom to do what is necessary for their growth, and the freedom to decide what they share about that process. If they decide to tell you themselves, then that's fine.
- Some examples of things that are great for you to say when they get back include: "It's so good to see you again!" "I missed you!" "Looks like you're all done." "I guess we're finished. Are you ready to go?"
- Sometimes children may bring art with them. Another way you can work with me to make therapy more effective is to offer encouragement rather than praise. So, for example, rather than saying "That's so pretty!" you might say something like, "It looks like you worked hard on that," or "It looks like you're proud of that one." This lets them make their own internal judgments. Feel free to talk to me if you have any questions about this.

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Considerations and Informed Consent regarding touch in Play Therapy

Healthy touch is essential to the human experience and is a very important part of a full childhood. When a child experiences touch from a caring and safe caregiver, it promotes their growth. It may also be an integral part of how a child regulates and manages their emotions. On the other hand, when a child initiates a healthy touch and has it refused, that can be damaging to a relationship and to the child's sense of self-worth.

When I say healthy touch, I am talking about things like a high five after a child achieves a goal, or holding a small child's hand on the way to the playroom to make sure they get there safely. Healthy touch is usually enjoyable, but may sometimes be uncomfortable—for example, taking a child's hand to prevent him from hitting a sibling.

In play therapy, healthy touch may sometimes be part of the process. That being said, it is something that needs to be taken very seriously. I want you to be informed of exactly how healthy touch may occur, to understand how I will respond when it does, and to know that you are an active part of your child's therapy in this regard.

First, to be clear, touch will NEVER occur under the following circumstances:

- I will NEVER initiate touch with your child. If touch occurs, it will be because the child seeks it first. The only exception to this rule is matters of safety (for example, if a child loses their balance and I can keep them from falling by supporting them, I will).
- I will NEVER engage in any kind of sexual contact with a child.
- I will NEVER touch a child when the child seems uncomfortable with touch.
- I will NEVER touch a child when I am uncomfortable with the touch for any reason.
- I will NEVER touch a child when I am frustrated or angry.

When a child does initiate healthy touch in play therapy, I will respond in kind only if it meets the needs of the child and is consistent with the goals for treatment that we will decide on together.

I cannot always anticipate when a child is going to initiate touch. In cases when a child initiates inappropriate touch (for example, an aggressive or traumatized child attempting to hit me), I will respond calmly by explaining that such touch is not okay and providing alternative ways for them to meet their needs. In more extreme cases, such as when a child needs to be physically restrained or carried out of the play room, I will come get you and ask you to do it.

When significant touch occurs in play therapy (by significant, I mean anything more involved than a high five), I will let you know. This is one way that I try to balance the child's confidentiality and your right as a parent to know what is happening with your child.

For children who have experienced trauma or abuse, I will be especially careful in determining whether any form of touch should be allowed in therapy. Furthermore, I will consult with other professionals before applying it (without sharing any confidential information, of course) and will discuss it at length with you.

If you are interested, I can provide you with a copy of the **Association for Play Therapy's Paper on Touch**, which outlines best practices for the clinical, professional, and ethical issues of applying touch in play therapy. You can also find it online here:

<http://www.a4pt.org/?page=Research>

By signing below, you confirm that you understand the implications of all of the above information and give your permission for me to move forward with therapy for your child under these circumstances. You also affirm that all of your questions regarding touch in play therapy have been adequately answered and all of your concerns have been addressed. You also understand that you can talk with me at any time if any further questions or concerns arrive and agree to do so.

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____