



**What is play therapy?
What do I need to expect?**

PAPPUS
PLAY THERAPY

**"Play therapy is about enabling
your child's potential"**

What is play therapy?

Play therapy is a form of therapy mainly used with children. The play room is a safe space for the children to express their feelings, thoughts and experiences through play and exploration. The play therapist aims to create a warm friendly relationship with the child, accepting them for who they are and giving them permission to express themselves. They will recognise the feelings of the child and express those feelings back to them whilst respecting the child's ability to solve his/her problems and give the child the opportunity to do so.



Do I get to stay in the session?

No — Play therapy works best when children have a private, safe space just for them. If parents or teachers are present, children often act differently, which can interrupt the therapeutic process. However, I keep in regular touch with parents and teachers outside of sessions through review meetings or informal updates.

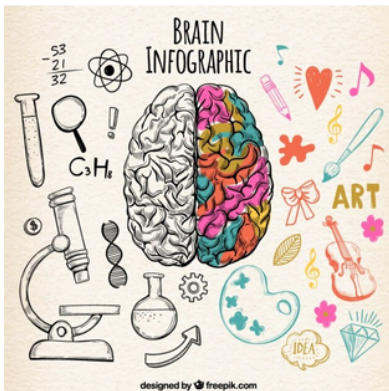
What happens in the sessions?

Children have access to a special toolkit of toys, art materials, sand, role-play props, and more. They are free to choose what they want to do, and through play, they express their feelings and work through experiences. My role is to support them safely in this process using therapeutic skills.

How does Play Therapy work?

Play therapy is a right-brain experience for the child. The right side of the brain is responsible for creativity. When you play you actively engage the right side of your brain and any emotions stored deep in your unconscious memory have the opportunity to rise to the conscious.

The left side of the brain lends itself to more traditional therapies such as talking therapy. Children might find it too hard to put into words, or not have the vocabulary to explain how they feel or what is troubling them. Therefore, play therapy allows the right side of the brain to communicate what the left side may not be able to.



How will I know if it is working?

I measure progress in a few ways: SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) at the beginning, middle, and end of therapy to track changes.

I gather regular observations from parents, teachers, and sometimes the child themselves.

I track emotional, behavioural, and relational changes.

I discuss changes in the child's process, in my private therapist journal.

I speak with my clinical supervisor (without using identifying information) to make sure I am working in the best way for your child.

Progress isn't always "linear"; sometimes children show progress in subtle ways like using new coping skills, expressing their feelings more, or showing more confidence.

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Play is a child's natural
medium for self
expression

Virginia Axline



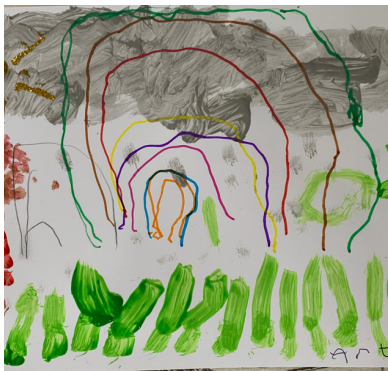
Common Questions...

Will my child's behaviour change?

Your child's behaviour may change initially whilst they are processing their emotions. This is normal, please, let me know if you are concerned.

How many weeks will my child need play therapy?

It varies depending on the individual child. Some children may benefit from 15 sessions, while others may need a longer course (for care-experienced children, I recommend a minimum of 30 sessions). I suggest starting with an initial block of 15 sessions. We would review progress together at week 9 and agree on the best plan moving forward.



How long do sessions take?

Each session is 30–40 minutes to match a child's natural attention span and emotional capacity for focused therapeutic work. Keeping sessions at the same time each week provides consistency and predictability, which helps children feel safe and builds trust in the therapeutic process.

What happens if my child refuses to come to their session?

Often children will test the boundaries to see if they have a voice and if it is going to be respected. I will respect their wishes, I may need to speak with you about ending the therapy if they are repeatedly missing sessions.

Top Tip

It might be worth your child wearing the same clothes each week, I try and minimise damage to uniform, but paint, clay and felt tips are used regularly.

“All behaviour is communication”

Important language...

Instead of saying...

"Did you have a nice time?"

"What did you do today?"

"Were you good?"

"Tell me what you talked about!"

"Did you behave?"

"Was it fun?"

Try saying...

"It's lovely to see you."

"I hope you felt safe while you were there."

"You worked really hard today."

"I'm proud of you for being so brave."

"You're doing really important work."

"I'm glad you had your special time today."

Why?

Therapy isn't always "nice" — it can bring up hard feelings.

Children shouldn't feel pressured to talk about their sessions.

Therapy isn't about being 'good' or 'bad' — it's about feeling and healing.

Sessions are private; pushing for details can make a child anxious.

Therapy is about emotional expression, not about perfect behaviour.

Some sessions will feel fun, others will be difficult — and that's okay.



"Children's mental health is just as important as their physical health — and deserves the same quality of support."

**— Kate Middleton,
The Princess of Wales**

How can we help at home?

1

Talk When Things are Calm ("Strike While the Iron is Gold")

Don't try to reason or correct in the middle of a meltdown. Wait until your child is calm, then gently talk about what happened. This helps your child reflect without feeling overwhelmed or defensive.

2

Name Your Own Feelings Out Loud

Say things like, "I'm feeling a bit frustrated right now, so I'm going to take a few deep breaths." This shows children that big feelings are normal and can be managed safely. It is ok to have all feelings, model how to express them.

3

Create Social Stories Together

Write or draw simple stories that explain what to do when feelings get big — like a story about "What I Can Do When I Feel Angry." This gives children a visual, predictable guide for tricky moments. Also write social stories to support them in their weekly activities - whats coming next.

4

Focus on Presence Over Punishment

Instead of punishing after big behaviours, focus on being calmly present. You might say, "I'm here. We'll get through this together." Being consistently available helps your child feel safe enough to regulate.

5

Celebrate Small Wins

Notice and celebrate even small steps in self-regulation ("I saw you took a deep breath when you were upset — that was brilliant!"). Positive attention builds confidence and motivation to keep trying.



ABOUT ME...

Who have I trained with?

I trained to be a play therapist through PTUK and APAC.

APAC Play Therapy Training is the largest, most experienced and dedicated Creative Arts and Play Therapy Training organisation in the world.

PTUK was established in October 2000 and are the UK's Society for Play and Creative Arts Therapies designed for anyone interested in helping children with emotional literacy, behaviour or mental health problems.

I am also a qualified teacher.



Do I keep any records?

Yes, but only what is necessary. I use 'Fortuna' which is a highly secure system provided by PTUK for me to record your and your child's information. Your's and your child's details are only processed by me (the therapist), for communication purposes. They are not processed by PTUK, neither are they released by PTUK to any other organisation or person, unless obtained through court proceedings.



About me

I'm passionate about supporting children's mental health. While I always knew I wanted to work with children, it wasn't until after bringing my son home that I realised my focus needed to be on helping children with big feelings. As a teacher, I loved working with children, but I often felt helpless because I couldn't provide each one with the time, support, or expertise they truly needed. After seeing so many children struggling with their mental health post-lockdown, I decided to retrain as a play therapist.

In my spare time, I enjoy taking our dog and son on adventures, being creative, crafting, and capturing moments through photography. I also love gardening—when it's not raining!



"Being able to feel safe with other people is probably the single most important aspect of mental health. Safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives."

— Bessel van der Kolk, The Body Keeps the Score

Your rights

You have a right to access personal information that I hold about you or your child. Please see my Privacy Policy for more information on individuals' rights and how to request them.

For details of information I, your service provider, or a clinical supervisor holds, please contact: Zoe at zoe@pappusplaytherapy.com

For details of information held by Play Therapy UK, please contact: Data Controller, Play Therapy UK, The Coach House, Belmont Road, Uckfield TN25 1BP. Phone: 01825 761143



Supervision and quality assurance

All practitioners on the Register of Play and Creative Arts Therapists, managed by PTUK, and accredited by the Professional Standards Authority, must have a set number of hours of clinical supervision. The therapist makes a verbal report on each child (who is anonymised) to a clinical supervisor who is experienced in working in therapy with children. The child's progress and anything that is relevant, is discussed. The clinical supervisor provides support and advice, and if necessary, suggesting action to be taken.



My Qualifications

- Therapeutic Play Practitioner
- Play therapist
- Qualified Teacher (with QTS)
- Childminder training and registered with Ofsted
- Trauma Training
- Training for Adopted and Fostered children
- First aid trained
- Advanced child protection training
- DBS
- Public liability insurance
- ICO registered

Contact me

Please let me know if your child isn't going to be able to make a session as soon as you know.

If you have any concerns please also contact me:

077033 66984

zoe@pappusplaytherapy.com

Play Therapy Benefits...

P

Processing Big Feelings

Through play, children can safely work through feelings they might not know how to put into words yet.

L

Learning and Growing

Play therapy helps children build important skills like managing emotions, solving problems, and communicating with others.

A

Acceptance and Confidence

In play therapy, children are accepted just as they are, which helps them feel good about themselves and build confidence.

Y

Your Child Builds Stronger Connections

As they process their feelings, children often find it easier to connect with family, friends, and other important people in their lives.

Please note:

The benefits outlined above are just a few of the ways play therapy can support your child.

Other key benefits include:

Processing Trauma — Helping children work through past experiences in a gentle, supportive way.

Learning to Trust — Building trust in adults and themselves, which is especially important for children who have experienced difficulty.

Achieving Emotional Regulation — Supporting children in managing intense emotions, helping them stay calm and balanced.

Your Child's Voice is Heard — Ensuring your child's feelings, needs, and experiences are validated, even when they struggle to express them in words.

Every child's experience is unique, and the therapy process is tailored to meet their individual needs.
