



MODULE 4: NONDIRECTIVE SANDTRAY PLAY THERAPY

When we are working with children in the sand, it often looks like nondirective play therapy in the sand. So those of you who may or may not be trained in play therapy, I want to discuss just here briefly. I mean, this could be a whole three, you know, three-month class just in and of itself, just talking about child centered play therapy. So, we're just going to do a crash course and tell you a little bit and give you some more directions about if you want to learn more about what sandtray is going to look like with kids, where you need to go, and what to expect.

One thing, before we dive into here, is to remember that kids will have the moving worlds, meaning that they do not build statically, and they often don't respond to directives. They will come in and be like, "SAND, WOO, YES!" And, so if you expect them to build like an adult, you going to be very disappointed, and then you are going to think the sandtray doesn't work.

So, what I want to talk about here is your role when you work with a kid and what you need to do. So, let's talk a little bit about child centered play therapy. So, when you have child centered play therapy, reflection, not interpretation is used. So, we use reflection to verbalize what is going on track and summarize what is going with the client, emotionally, in their internal world, as well as what they are doing. And, it focuses really on the process. This is very _____ in nature, meaning that there are no really big "goals". The only goal is to help this child be the best version of themselves they can be. And the theory behind it is that every child has within them the ability to grow. It is only our job to provide them the right environment to let them grow towards and actualize the way that they are meant to anyway.

So, given that we don't have "like decreasing anxiety, or something like that as far as goals", here are just some of the broad goals that child centered play therapists want to have. So, you have self-control. They



have respect for themselves. They know their feelings are acceptable. They assume responsibility for the self. They allow themselves to have self-control and direction. And, then they gradually learn, at a feeling level, to accept themselves. And so then they make choices and be responsible for that choice. So, here is a video of Garry Landreth we will be linking up. And, I want you to just take a minute, and watch that, and then see if you're able to see yourself in some of what he does. And, maybe and what he does and what would be difficult for you to do, if you're not used to some of this child-centered way of being.

WATCH GARRY LANDRETH VIDEO

So, when we are talking about Garry Landreth, of course again, he is really the grandfather of child centered play therapy. In this video we watched, you will be able to see that he is very attentive. He tracked. When I say tracked, he kind of acted like a sports commentator, meaning that, "Now you're doing this. Now you're doing this." He reflected. "Oh, you're feeling very sad about that. Oh, now you're happy! Oh, I know you really want to stay in here, but it's time to go." He acknowledged and validated that feeling.

Another thing that play therapists often do is return the responsibility, meaning that we never want to do something for the child that they can do for themselves. So, what that looks like, then, in the sandtray, is that when a kid is trying to get something maybe unburied and they're like, "Uhhhh, I want you to help me!" If it's something you think they can do, then they get to do it themselves. But you are providing, you're narrating the whole time. Now what you are doing, when you do this, is you are providing that neuroception of safety. You're providing that safe space, that free and protected space for the client so they can do the hard things that they wouldn't be able to do otherwise. And, much like adults when you are working with them, and you're, "Oh, yeah," you're nodding and reflecting, maybe providing empathetic statements, and they get that you are there with them. . . how our children who we work with, how they know, is through this tracking and reflecting and some of these methods that we do in child-centered play therapy.

SANDTRAY SUITE

So, again, really short crash course. We will also be providing a link to a couple of really good child-centered, or just non-directive play therapy books, like from Terry Kottman and Garry Landreth for you guys to check out if you want to really go deep dive into the play therapy world, but just know that when you're working with kids in the sandtray, it looks a lot like the Garry Landreth session. And just be ready for that and don't think that it doesn't work just because it looks different.