



OKLAHOMA PLAY THERAPY  
TRAINING INSTITUTE

*expanding the power of play*

## Empathy Builders: Using Play Therapy for School Social Skills Groups

### PRESENTERS



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# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will learn:

- ❖ the basic tenants of play therapy
- ❖ how empathy is tied to social skills
- ❖ how empathy can help with conflict resolution
- ❖ learn play therapy techniques can be used to build empathy

# WHAT IS PLAY?



➤ Play is spontaneous, enjoyable, voluntary, and non goal-directed.

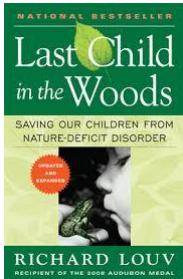
## BENEFITS

- Through the process of play, children learn to make sense of their world.
- Through play children express themselves, problem solve, learn mastery, and social skills

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# WHAT HAPPENS TO CHILDREN LACKING PLAY?

## Play Deficit



### The Play Deficit

**The Play Deficit** is the very real decline in play in our society. Children are spending less time playing outside than ever before. In fact, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, children spend less time in the United States away from their homes or a park or playground<sup>\*</sup>, and the availability of places to play is the lowest in low-income neighborhoods.

Signs of the Play Deficit include a general decrease in or elimination of recess time, a frequent complaint among parents on school boards, or a decrease in outdoor playtime as neighborhoods continue to grow. In some cases of Play Deficit, or areas where few or no places to play exist within walking distance, and a critical lack of awareness about the benefits of play.

#### Consequences of the Play Deficit

Play is the primary means by which children develop, and lack of play is causing three important physical, intellectual, social, and emotional harm:

##### Physical Harm

Children have had more than tripled in the past 20 years.<sup>\*\*</sup> There is a twenty-one percent increase of childhood obesity in neighborhoods without a park or playground.<sup>\*\*\*</sup> In fact, children with a park or playground within a half mile of their home are more likely to be a healthy weight than children without playgrounds or areas nearby.

##### Intellectual Harm

Training your children how to work in groups, share, negotiate, resolve conflicts, and set for themselves. Children who do not play are at an increased risk for developing problems during more advanced social interactions.<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup>

##### Social Harm

Training your children how to work in groups, share, negotiate, resolve conflicts, and set for themselves. Children who do not play are at an increased risk for developing problems during more advanced social interactions.<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup>

**Conclusion**  
Our society has created many parents of children regardless that "play balance" has been lacking in their childhood. Adults with our voices that increased incidence of violence, behavioral problems, involving emotional outbreaks and problems when interacting with peers and authority figures.<sup>\*\*\*\*\*</sup>

##### The Play Deficit

As a society we are realizing the Play Deficit and is wanting that every child in America has a great place to play within walking distance. We are doing this by building playgrounds through the participation and leadership of communities, mapping the naked play in the nation, and designating safe spaces and advocates who are increasing opportunities to play.



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# WHAT IS PLAY THERAPY?

*The Association of Play Therapy defines play therapy as "the systematic use of a theoretical model to establish an interpersonal process wherein trained play therapists use the therapeutic powers of play to help clients prevent or resolve psychosocial difficulties and achieve optimal growth and development."*

## BECOMING A SCHOOL BASED-REGISTERED PLAY THERAPIST

### School Based-Registered Play Therapist (SB-RPT)

- Current and active state license or certificate to practice from State Dept. of Ed.
- Master's Degree with coursework including: child development, theories of personality, principles of psychotherapy, and child & adolescent psychopathology, and ethics
- Clinical experience required by State Dept. of Ed. **PLUS** 2 years continuous school experience post certification/license
- 150 hours of Play Therapy instruction. APT recommends: Play Therapy History 4-5 hours, Play Therapy Theories 40-50 hours, Play Therapy Techniques/Methods 40-50 hours, Play Therapy Application 40-50 hours
- Supervision
  - REQUIRED to be supervised by RPT-S AFTER completion of master's degree for a time period of no less than 1 school year with a minimum of 600 contact and 50 supervision hours
- Renewal
  - Annually send in active state license
  - 18 hours of CE from APT approved provider every 36 months **PLUS** 3 hours DSM/Psychopathology

*\*\*All this information is found in more detail in the SB-RPT Guide at [www.a4pt.org](http://www.a4pt.org)*

## EMPATHY AND SOCIAL SKILLS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw>

Brene Brown Short Video on Empathy



# EMPATHY

\*Emotional Sharing

\*Empathic Concern

\*Perspective Taking



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# DEVELOPMENT OF EMPATHY

Provide children with the support they need to develop strong self-regulation skills

Seize everyday opportunities to model—and induce—sympathetic feelings for other people

Help kids discover what they have in common with other people

Foster cognitive empathy through literature and role-playing

Foster cognitive empathy through compassion training

—Dr. Gwen Dewar

# EMOTIONS



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## DEVELOPMENT OF EMPATHY, CONT.

Help young children improve their face-reading skills

Show kids how to "make a face" while they try to imagine how someone else feels.

Help children develop a sense of morality that depends on internal self-control, not on rewards or punishments

Educate kids about failures of the imagination

Talk with children about mechanisms of moral disengagement -- the rationalizations that people use to justify callous or cruel acts

-Dr. Gwen Dewar

THE  FEELINGS GAME		
<i>FOR EVERY</i>		<i>SHARE</i>
Red		_____.
Brown		_____.
Green		_____.
Yellow		_____.
Blue		_____.
Orange		_____.

## QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

### References and Resources

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Landreth, G. L. (2002). *Play therapy: The art of the relationship*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.

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