



## PLAY & CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY

**Creative-Me Cornwall** provides play and creative arts therapy to children who have experienced trauma or who display emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Run by certified play therapist Sarah Foster who holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Play Therapy, a qualification awarded by PTUK.

After taking a BA in Art and Textiles, in her spare time Sarah focused on art and design, helping with community projects and creating designs while studying Art Therapy, counselling and training in children's yoga. While volunteering in schools and refugee families, she became aware of the combined wellbeing and healing aspects of play, art and nature. Realising that training in Play Therapy would enable her to combine her skills and interests in order to benefit a wide range of children and their families, she embarked on a Play and Creative Arts Therapy course.



Today she holds Play Therapy sessions in schools and community settings in mid Cornwall (including Truro and St Austell) and continues to love what she does: making a difference to children's wellbeing, in order for them to develop their potential.



### **What is play therapy?** *"Toys are children's words and play is their language" –*

Play is instinctual and natural to children and is used to communicate, learn and develop an understanding of the world.



Play Therapy uses play, a child's natural language to enable children to express themselves, explore their thoughts and feelings and make sense of their life experiences.

It uses creative arts (drama, music, dance, art and crafts, tailor-made therapeutic stories as, well as other forms of play which access unconscious as well as conscious processes.

Children do not always have the emotional language skills or the understanding of how this has affected their inner world, a play therapist is trained to reflect the underlying emotions back to the child who gains better awareness of their conscious and unconscious world.

A Play Therapist's 'tool kit' combines a range of carefully selected toys and creative materials in order for children to express themselves in any way they choose.

Using a range of natural (clay, sand etc) and manmade mediums, a child is given the opportunity to use symbol and metaphor to 'play out' feelings and make sense of experiences they may be facing.




Types of play such as repetitive play can represent internal battles or being stuck in a way of thinking or behaving, while a doll, a soft toy, and art or messy play can transport children back to a missed developmental stage.

A Play therapist will combine child-led and more directive methods using Virginia Axline's Eight Principles. By following the child's lead, working at the child's pace, respecting the child's ability to solve their own issues, the therapist does not judge, and uses reflection in order for the child to gain insights.



## Who is it for?

 Play Therapy is a proven therapeutic intervention for children facing a wide range of difficulties. It is suitable for children aged between 4 and 12 years and can be held on a 1:1 basis or used with groups of up to 4 children who share similar issues.

There are many reasons a child may be referred for individual 1:1 sessions including: anxiety, stress, low self-esteem, loss of confidence, withdrawn, difficulties in regulation, aggression/anger, family breakdown, continued unhappiness, school refusal.

 Staff in schools have a unique perspective on individuals and groups of children in their care and



can identify difficulties and changes early on.

## If you know a child who:

- Has nightmares or disturbed sleep
  - Is at risk or is excluded from school
  - Struggles with mental health issues
  - Has suffered trauma
  - Has suffered emotional, physical or sexual abuse or neglect
  - Is adopted or fostered
  - Has separated/divorced parents and are not coping
  - Suffers with stress, phobias or anxiety
  - Has suffered loss or bereavement or any kind
  - Has had experience of domestic abuse, substance or alcohol abuse within the home.
  - Is withdrawn or continually unhappy
  - Is not coping with change (change of environment/place, language/ school etc)
  - Is ill, disabled, in hospital, or has a long term health issue
  - Finds it difficult to make friends
  - Quarrels frequently with peers or siblings
  - Bullies others or is bullied themselves
  - Displays inappropriate behaviour
  - Who displays low confidence
  - Who has depression
  - Doesn't play or has delayed play development
  - Has emotional or behavioural problems
  - Has communication problems or delayed language skills
- Has Asperger's or Autism If so please contact **Creative-Me**



## How many sessions would a child usually have?

- Each 1:1 session is approx 45 minutes long depending on the age and the development level of the child. One session per week is recommended on a regular day at the same time. This is important for developing a trusting relationship and missed or unplanned sessions may disrupt their progress.
- Some children can respond to a short term intervention of around 14 -18 sessions.
- If problems have existed for a long time, or are complicated, it may take considerably longer and in some cases we can work with children for over a year

## Where is it held?

Play Therapy can be mobile and is held in private, secure spaces in schools, village halls, and in children's and community centres. LANDPlay (outdoor play therapy) is held in safe, secure spaces in nature.



## Play therapy groups ✕

A play therapy group focuses on teamwork and helps with overcoming challenges, builds confidence and empowerment and develops resilience.

Sessions include themes such as: science; space, fantasy and can be linked

in with curriculum topics (history, geography, art, etc.). Evidence has shown significant positive changes in children working with their peers, listening, communications and concentration. (PTUK data)

Often schools will consider children who show signs of the following for group play therapy: poor social skills, those who have difficult relationships, those not coping with loss, separation or divorce, poor peer skills, shyness, anxiety or those finding it hard to adjust to changes.

Group sessions can go some way to helping nervous and unsure children who refuse school or struggle with settling in to the classroom and who have trouble interacting with peers and can assist them to integrate better into school life and the classroom

Group Play Therapy is usually 8-10 (once a week) sessions.

## What is the evidence that it works?

Evidence that Play Therapy works can be seen via measures and assessments made prior to and following Play Therapy. These outline the changes and developments that take place in the child's behaviour and emotional state.

Approximately 74% to 83% of children show positive change according to observations by referrers (teachers and parents) when Play Therapy is delivered to PTUK standards.



# What does a Play Therapist use?



## The Play Therapy 'tool kit' and techniques

- Clay and sculpturing
- Sand tray and miniatures
- Therapeutic storytelling
- Creative visualisations, deep breathing and relaxation exercises
- Traditional toys ie. dolls house
- Constructions toys
- Puppets
- Dressing up, role play
- Music, dance and movement
- Art and crafts: drawing and painting



*All the toys and materials can help give form to the child's inner world and offer the child the opportunity to express feelings safely.*



## Understanding the Sessions



### Can a therapist tell me what happens in a session?



The therapist is able to meet with parents and school staff at the start, to learn about the child, then during the middle and at the end of the sessions to listen to and to give feedback to parents about a child's progress, but not their 'process'. This means that we are able to tell you in general terms the themes that might be occurring and how the child will be developing in therapy, but they will not specifically be able to tell you what has gone on in the sessions. Understandably this can potentially feel

frustrating for school staff and parents, but it is an essential part of the therapeutic process. In order to work out and process their problems freely, children need to be able to trust the therapist and believe that they will provide a safe and secure space to do this.

Confidentiality ensures this trust remains constant and so the therapist will only break confidentiality if they believe the child is at risk of being harmed, (and will make the child aware of the need to inform another adult) or if the child discloses that they are being hurt. If a child discloses, or there is a child protection procedure, the session will be stopped immediately and a member of safeguarding sought.

If this happens with a private client then parent will be informed and outside agencies will be contacted.

### **Should play therapy be halted if the child misbehaves?**



Play therapy is unconditional and should not be regarded as a 'punishment' or 'reward'. A disruptive or badly behaved child can use the time to process and work through their feelings and better understand their behaviour. The key aspect is that the Play Therapist is not judgemental, they do not tell the child they are right or wrong, this gives the child the permission to be what they want to be and to know that they are unconditionally accepted (within the agreed boundaries).

### **Is it ok to disrupt a session?**

The short answer is no! Children need a consistent and safe place to feel secure enough to express themselves freely. Even a single interruption can stop the therapeutic process and the child may not go back to the stage they reached and there can be a breakdown in the therapy process.

The same room/room layout and same day and time should be used each week, the therapist collecting and returning the child to that they can adapt back into their day.

### **Can I ask the child about the sessions?**

Although you may be curious, it is best not to ask a child about their therapy sessions, or say things such as "have fun!" when they are going to Play Therapy. The reasons are because children in the sessions are often exploring difficult events which are unlikely to be fun for them. However, there is fun

and laughter to be had but the content of each session depends on what the child wants to bring into the room on the day.

It is up to each child if they want to discuss or answer questions from parents or staff, please remember that their process is private and they may feel obliged to reply when they do not actually want to. All information is strictly confidential unless a disclosure or a child protection concern is raised.

At the end of the Play Therapy a report will be given to the school or parent along with any further recommendations for support.

### ✕ Referring a child. ✕

I work both privately, and within schools.

For parents/ carers: if you feel your child would benefit from Play Therapy- please get in touch to find out about the next steps.

For schools: If you recognise that there is a child in your classroom who would benefit from Play Therapy, please speak to the SENCO and ask them to get in touch. I will be happy to carry out an assessment, agree the objectives of the therapy, discuss the number of sessions and fees.

For costs for both private and school sessions please contact Sarah at Creative-Me



**Additional Services** As well as play therapy, I can now offer **Outdoor Play Therapy (LANDPlay)** and a parent and child "play program" (PCAP) for parents and carers who are feeling challenged by or struggling with parent/child relationships.



is a type of outdoor adapted play therapy developed by ex teacher and play therapist, Kate Macairt (CreativeSpark). It is a safe, therapeutic outdoor space additional to the play therapy room where creativity and connection to nature are at its core. Known for its effectiveness helping children who have been identified as struggling with physical and or emotional difficulties: particularly heightened fear responses and impulse control issues. Outdoor Play Therapy can help to 'ground' and balance children who are hyper, and assist those suffering from loss and those adapting to change. Enriched and diverse sensory experiences are essential for healthy brain growth and neural network building. Using a

creative and reflective approach allows the child space to explore and embody experiences, strengthen sensory neural networks and promotes curiosity to learn. A positive sense of self can emerge through the nurturing aspects of nature. Nature is a terrific playground! Natural resources, objects such as: wood, seeds, stones, shells, dried plants and flowers, clay, mud, sand and water are used, alongside a small amount of traditional toys, arts and crafts. Available during the Summer and Autumn months.

## Sessions (PCAP)

**"Helping to reduce parental stress, empowering parents and carers as the change agents in their own families." Debi Maskell-Graham.**

An innovative early help program for parents and children from 3 to 15 plus. Offered to groups, 1:1 or through a home visiting model. These sessions give a helping hand to the parent – child relationship, the practitioner is on hand throughout the programme for support. Parent and Child Play involve sharing skills with parents and carers through a ten-step program of interactive sessions. These skills are linked to the best outcomes in educational attainment, emotional wellbeing, mental health and social and family relationships. Over the ten sessions we look at:

- Play skills and creating a play/activity box tailored to the child
- Containment (managing time, environment, emotions, and helping children make helpful choices)
- Head, heart and hands reflective skills
- For information on Play Therapy (individual and groups), Outdoor Play Therapy or Parent and Child Play please speak to Sarah Foster:

 Phone: **07941 535835**  Email: **[info@creative-me-playtherapy.co.uk](mailto:info@creative-me-playtherapy.co.uk)**

