USING PLAY THERAPY TECHNIQUES IN A PRESCHOOL SETTING

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this project to my incredible support system without whom this amazing journey would not have been possible.

To Derek, I appreciate you more than I could ever express in words. Thank you for your endless support and encouragement to follow my dreams, even when it meant moving to a new province. I wouldn't be who I am today without you.

To my family, thank you for your unending support throughout my masters. Your love, patience, kindness and humour are my inspiration and what continue to carry me through my educational career.

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Abstract

During the early educational years of preschool and kindergarten, children who may experience behavioural difficulties such as inattention, aggression, or lack of appropriate social skills can pose difficult challenges for early childhood educators and school counsellors. This project focuses on providing school counsellors with the opportunity to collaborate with educators in a school setting by attending a workshop which will help to ensure proper implementation of a proactive play therapy techniques manual within preschool and kindergarten classrooms in order to benefit all children. This program allows for learning and growth in four key areas: emotional expression, stress management, problem solving and social skills. It is hoped that through this final project, the gap between play therapy and early childhood education will begin to close.

Keywords: play therapy, social-emotional development, early childhood education

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Chapter One: Overview and Introduction

The importance of the use of play therapy with children has been well documented. The therapeutic powers of play include eight broad categories including: emotional regulation, communication, relationship enhancement, moral judgement, ego boosting, stress management, preparation for life, and self-actualization (Schaefer, 2011). These categories contain many of the main benefits of play and play therapy, including to build positive social skills, develop cause-effect thinking, process stressful experiences, and provide a sense of power and control through solving problems and mastering new experiences (Drewes & Schaefer, 2010). Although play is beneficial for all ages and stages of life (Schaefer, 2011), it is especially critical to childhood development (Drewes & Schaefer, 2010). Specifically, the early years between age four and six, a child is beginning to develop positive social skills, coping mechanisms for adverse childhood experiences, and self-concept (Cheng & Ray, 2016; Tucker, Schieffer, Wills, Hull & Murphy, 2017). Despite these proven benefits, very little has been done to include play therapy techniques in early childhood classrooms. Drewes and Schaefer state that play therapy within schools is needed now more than ever, due to the increasingly common rate of school violence, bullying, homelessness, aggression, and trauma that children and their families experience (2010). Therefore, researchers are adamant that play therapy is an important tool to utilize with preschool and kindergarten children because of the many benefits play therapy offers, such as to promote healthy relationships, develop positive coping mechanisms, and increase resiliency. This project will address the current gap between play therapy techniques and early childhood classrooms through the creation of a play therapy techniques workshop and facilitator's manual for school counsellors to

utilize within their schools. A study conducted by Ebrahim, Steen and Paradise (2012) provided evidence to suggest that although many elementary school counsellors find play therapy helpful, there are many barriers, such as lack of time, resources, and space, which prevent school counsellors from effectively using play therapy—contributing to the gap between the use of play therapy techniques in early childhood classrooms. This project provides a comprehensive review of the academic literature regarding play therapy and its associated techniques, as well as the benefits of its use with children in the early stages of development during the preschool and kindergarten years. The purpose of this project is twofold: first, to provide a workshop tailored to school counsellors to increase awareness and knowledge about play therapy. By providing this information, school counsellors will feel more confident, supported, and equipped to implement and promote the use of play therapy techniques as strategies for teaching children positive relationship skills, emotional regulation, and creative thinking. Secondly, an accompanying facilitator's manual including activities for implementing play therapy into preschool and kindergarten classrooms will also be provided. The intent of this chapter is to provide a succinct introduction to the project. More specifically, this chapter outlines the projects' rationale, format, as well as a statement of personal interest from the author.

Project Rationale

There are two main rationales for the creation of this project. First, the facilitator's manual seeks to expand and increase school counsellor's awareness and knowledge about the effective uses of play therapy techniques within early childhood classrooms. setting. Currently, very little research exists on the implementation of play therapy techniques into school settings, as well as whether school counsellors are even aware of play therapy

or trained in the appropriate implementation of these techniques. By providing a useful manual to expand the knowledge about how to use play therapy techniques in preschool and kindergarten classrooms, it is hoped that this gap between play therapy and early childhood education will begin to close. Second, this project will provide a workshop for school counsellors, so they can be successful at implementing these strategies. By providing school counsellors with tools they can use to be successful, they can help to bridge the gap between teaching and counselling, thus creating a more inclusive, streamlined process. While school counsellors are the main population for which this workshop and manual will be produced, there are several other populations who may benefit vicariously through this project, such as early childhood educators, school teachers, and parents. Early childhood educators and school teachers may be taught how to use play therapy strategies by their school counsellor to help facilitate the implementation process into their classrooms; more specifically, within preschool and kindergarten. Researchers have identified the preschool and kindergarten stages as an important time in a child's development to begin to nurture and support a child's behavioural and emotional regulation (Boyer, 2016). By including play therapy techniques in preschool and kindergarten classrooms, school counsellors and early childhood educators can help to promote healthy behavioural and emotional regulation development. Further, to extend a child's success with these strategies, parents can be informed about the ways their child's school teacher and counsellor are implementing play therapy into their classrooms to benefit their child. This, in turn, can allow a parent to become involved in the process of using play therapy techniques by using similar language and strategies at home.

Glossary

This section provides and defines key terms used throughout the project. These terms are listed below:

Early Childhood Classroom: This refers to the main setting for the implementation of the project; preschool and kindergarten classrooms where children are between the ages of four and six.

Early Childhood Educators: Those who work within preschool and kindergarten classrooms, many of which have a degree in Early Childhood Education or in Teaching.

Facilitator or Facilitators: This term can refer to many different populations but involves the group leader who assists the children throughout a play therapy activity. This term can include school counsellors, teachers, and early childhood educators.

Play Therapy: This term refers to the counselling modality in which trained therapists help children "prevent or resolve psychosocial difficulties and achieve optimal growth and development" (Association for Play Therapy, 2016).

Play Therapy Techniques: Specific techniques and activities that are used in the modality of play therapy to achieve a goal, such as the use of a story with emotional expression by the main character to promote the understanding of feelings and empathy of others.

School Counsellors: Those who work within schools, many of which are required to have a master's degree in Counselling, Education, School Psychology, or another related field.

Project Format

This final project consists of 3 segments that highlights the use of play therapy; the document itself which is inclusive of the entire project, a facilitator manual which is informed by an extensive literature review, and a workshop presentation for the practical application of the play therapy strategies. Therefore, chapter 1 will provide an overview and introduction to the project and chapter 2 will contain a comprehensive account of relevant literature on the area of play therapy which is necessary to inform the creation of the workshop and manual. Chapter 3 will outline the methodology needed to create this project and chapter 4 will include the discussion component of the project, including its strengths and limitations, areas of future research, and conclusions. Then, Appendix A and B will contain the workshop outline created to facilitate learning about play therapy techniques, as well as the manual used to accompany the workshop and help school counsellors implement what they have learned into classrooms effectively. This manual will contain play therapy activities, several helpful handouts, and a review of all play therapy techniques discussed in the workshop which a school counsellor can use to aid the implementation process.

Statement of Personal Interest

In the past, I have had some amazing experiences working with children in the early stages of development. When I worked as a preschool teacher at a private

cooperative school, my colleagues and I often had outside support workers or play therapists come into the classroom to work individually with several young students. While these workers often had the best intentions for their clients, I noticed that it was difficult at times for these workers to perform an effective intervention or use effective strategies with a student when other students were not involved in the process; support workers often tried to teach strategies or implement interventions in the presence of other students who did not understand the reasoning behind these workers and their "special attention" given to certain students, making other students hesitant about interacting with these "special" students during a support worker's visit. Further, it was difficult for us, as the main preschool teachers, to carry over these techniques to include within the classroom when the support worker was gone. For example, if a support worker suggested a student use a fidget toy during circle time to increase attention, this created difficulties with other children playing with the fidget toy as well or wanting their own fidget toy. This ultimately led to a decrease of attention by the other students and an increase of disruption throughout circle time. This disconnect between individual support for a child and communal inclusion was what first sparked my interest in developing a new tool for implementing play therapy so that all preschool children can benefit, rather than for just one student. .

Overall, it was through my experience and the obvious gap in literature regarding play therapy in schools that I decided to create a workshop and manual for school counsellors which emphasizes classroom-inclusive play therapy techniques that are easy to use and implement. It is hoped that using this project, school counsellors will become more equipped to integrate play therapy techniques into preschool and kindergarten

classrooms to improve behaviour management and promote healthy social, emotional, and academic development for all children.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

This chapter introduces the extensive review of literature which is relevant and necessary when discussing the importance of play and how play therapy techniques can be used within school settings. In this section, the focus centers on the importance of play and the history of play therapy, theoretical viewpoints on the reciprocal relationship between child development and play, and finally, implementation techniques for play therapy. The context for the play therapy information will be geared for preschool and kindergarten classroom settings.

An Introduction to Play Therapy

Play therapy is defined as a theoretical model which aims to use the therapeutic powers of play to prevent and resolve psycho-social difficulties and assist the client to achieve optimal growth and development (Association for Play Therapy, 2016; Jensen, Biesen, & Graham, 2017). Play therapists are licensed mental health professionals who have obtained at minimum a master's degree and have received extensive supervision and training in the field in order to be viewed as a play therapist specialist (Jensen, Biesen, & Graham, 2017). A play therapist is trained in providing a safe, supportive environment for children to play out concerns and difficulties, as well as helping children feel heard and understood; this in turn, promotes healthy expression of the child's emotions and actions which is then reflected to the child by the play therapist to foster greater understanding (Drewes & Schaefer, 2010). Reflecting a child's emotions and actions is a key technique that play therapists use to create an environment of open expression and understanding, as well as to enhance a positive therapeutic alliance between the therapist

and child. It is through the creation of a safe space where a child feels comfortable expressing their emotions, experiences, beliefs, and behaviours that they are more likely to try new behaviours; fostering their own self-growth and healing (Boyer, 2016). In a typical therapeutic play therapy setting, a variety of tools are used to engage a child in treatment, including story-telling, role-playing, puppets, and sand trays filled with various objects and figures (Jensen, Biesen, & Graham, 2017). However, when using play therapy within school settings, these tools and techniques may look different. For example, when conducting play therapy in schools, small groups allow children to learn how to positively engage with others, freely express emotions in a safe setting, and practice these new skills immediately with their group members (Jarareh, Mohammadi, Nader, & Moosavian, 2016). The use of play therapy in school settings also allows behaviours specific to schools and classrooms to be targeted and addressed as soon as they occur. For example, if a teacher notices that one of their students is becoming quiet and withdrawn, a school counsellor can provide a more quick and effective method of intervention within the school as opposed to an independent counsellor which normally involves waiting for availability to complete a parent and child intake, a parent taking time off work or a child out of school, and attending therapy out of town, etc. By training school counsellors to be able to provide play therapy interventions, schools will be providing wrap-around support and access for all children. Further, as schools and communities become increasingly culturally diverse, the need for a culturally responsive intervention is much more pervasive. In the past, play therapy and its importance has involved a Eurocentric framework; it's uses, and effectiveness have been practiced mainly on the dominant white, European culture. Due to the constant growth and change

of culture and diversity in Canada—and in turn, our schools—it is hoped that the play therapy techniques discussed and shared with school counsellors will begin to move away from a traditional Eurocentric viewpoint and towards a more modern, North American framework which emphasizes the need for respect of different cultural groups and how to adapt traditional methods of play therapy with multicultural populations (Vaughn, 2012).

History of Play Therapy

The importance of play in a child's life has been well documented throughout history. Adler (1928) described play as an educational aid, stimuli for the spirit and life-techniques of the child, and an important phenomenon which shows the process of preparation for the future. Developing this idea further, Piaget (1962), proposed that during a child's second stage of cognitive development, a time he referred to as "preoperational", the child begins assimilative play with the ability to form symbols; this is the beginning of their ability to comprehend complex issues, motives, and feelings. Similarly, Vygotsky (1987) also created a theory of cognitive development which states that information from the external world is transformed and internalized through language. Therefore, play is deemed essential for both a child's language development and understanding of the external world (Vygotsky, Rieber, & Carton, 1987). In other words, play serves many important functions in a child's life, such as for learning, expression, and socialization, most of which takes place in the context of schools.

Origins. The origins of play therapy date back to the early 1900's with several early psychoanalysts; Sigmund Freud (1909), Anna Freud (1928), and Melanie Klein (1932). Freud (1909) describes play as a modality for expression which actively suspends reality, allowing a child the freedom to pretend and make believe. This use of play as

dramatic expression is the equivalent of a metaphor in language in adulthood (Schaefer, 2011). Similarly, Anna Freud extended her father's work but asserted that the meaning behind play is more ambiguous than that of language and that many differences exist between the analysis of children versus the analysis of adults (Schaefer, 2011). For example, Anna Freud believed that, unlike adults, children are incapable of transference neurosis—the act of transferring one's suppressed emotions onto the therapist (Schaefer, 2011). Klein's theory took a contrary approach as she believed that children can understand and utilize a therapist's interpretations of their transference as long as they are clear, succinct and employ the child's words (Schaefer, 2011). Therefore, Klein believed that the content of play should be regarded as a vehicle for interpretation of a child's unconscious material (Schaefer, 2011). All three of these theorists discussed the importance of using play to aid in a child's therapeutic process as a type of "free association" (Porter, Hernandez-Reif, & Jessee, 2009). In other words, play is used by children as a catalyst for free creative expression, learning, and development.

Similarly, Erikson believed that play is a child's means of reasoning, self-teaching, and self-healing; all of which help a child organize their inner world through expressing it in their outer world (Maier, 1969). Erik Erikson's psychoanalytic theory posited that "play is the ego's acceptable tool for self-expression just as dreams afford expression for the id" (Maier, 1969, p. 26). Self-expression for children naturally occurs through play and allows them the opportunity to increase their ability to communicate internal awareness of the self and others (Landreth, Ray, & Bratton, 2009). While adults are accustomed to communicating verbally, children tend to utilize developmentally appropriate communication through play and activity (Packman & Bratton, 2003).

Therefore, by providing children with age-appropriate activities and materials, they are more comfortable expressing their feelings and experiences (Packman & Bratton, 2003). In extending this concept of using age-appropriate activities that encourage the use of self-expression through play, Virginia Axline (1974) developed a school of play therapy that operated on the original beliefs of Carl Rogers; who believed that given the ideal therapeutic conditions, children are able to heal themselves (Porter, Hernandez-Reif, & Jessee, 2009). Axline modified Roger's theory and adapted it to be used with children through a more humanistic, child-centred approach to play therapy in which the foundational conditions necessary for therapeutic change included unconditional positive regard, empathic understanding, and authenticity (Schaefer, 2011).

It is from these origins that researchers then began to inquire and understand the benefits of play therapy. Many studies have explored the effectiveness of play therapy and it's benefits to the children that receive it. According to Landreth (2002), children learn six main skills from the play therapy relationship: "1) to accept themselves, 2) to respect themselves, 3) to assume responsibility for themselves, 4) to be creative and resourceful in confronting problems, 5) self-control and self-direction, and 6) to make choices and to be responsible for their choices" (as cited in Landreth, Ray, & Bratton, 2009, p. 283.). These six skills are beneficial for a child's overall growth in maturity. Further, play therapy has shown to be effective over as little as ten sessions by multiple studies. Children who received six sessions of play therapy showed significant increases in self-efficacy as compared to a control group (Fall, Balvanz, Johnson, & Nelson, 1999). Post (1999) reported that with an average of four play therapy sessions, at risk elementary school children were able to maintain their self-esteem scores and increase their internal

locus of control scores while the control group experienced a decrease in self-esteem scores and locus of control scores remained stagnant. Finally, another study reported that significant improvements in internalizing and externalizing problem behaviours was the result after ten sessions of play therapy with fourth and fifth grade students (Flahive & Ray, 2007). Aside from the behavioural benefits, play therapy is also beneficial for children of many different languages, ethnic and religious backgrounds, and ways of life. Child-centred play therapy is a culturally sensitive approach; the basic tenets of this approach such as empathy, understanding, acceptance and genuineness from the therapist do not change based on the child's cultural background (Landreth, Ray, & Bratton, 2009).

Despite the existing research on the many benefits of play therapy, there are also several researchers that have argued against the use of play therapy that should be included. These critics of play therapy mainly surround its lack of effectiveness and support the use of other interventions. Lebo (1953) and Levitt (1957, 1963, 1971), stated that play therapy was not backed by sound research and that evidence did not support the effectiveness of any psychotherapy approaches with children. Several more recent studies by Weisz, Weiss, Alicke and Klotz (1987) and Weisz, Weiss, Han, Granger and Morton (1995) offered two meta-analytic reviews of psychotherapy on children in which researchers concluded that behavioural therapeutic approaches were superior to the therapeutic play approach. There are also several critics that state play therapy is both time consuming and ineffective, however, these claims are mainly speculation and lack any research base (Ray, Bratton, Rhine, & Jones, 2001).

Regardless, play therapy has flourished in many specific areas. An outpatient clinic, an office, a school, a home, a hospital bed, a playground, or even the scene of a disaster are

all places where play therapy can be utilized; play therapy is only limited by the therapist's flexibility and creativity (Schaefer, 2011). Mainly, play therapy has increased in popularity within school settings in order to help school counsellors provide children who struggle with behavioural difficulties an intervention that is effective, child-based, and can elicit change after very few sessions. Its culturally responsive nature allows school counsellors to use it with children regardless of their background (Drewes & Schaefer, 2010). In school settings, four approaches of play therapy are used most frequently, including Child-Centred, Adlerian, Cognitive-Behavioural, and Eclectic (Drewes & Schaefer, 2010). These modalities will be discussed after the main theories of child development.

Summary

To summarize, play therapy has come a long way since the early 1900's when it was developed by psychoanalytic pioneers such as Sigmund Freud, Anna Freud, and Melanie Klein. Today, through the expansion of play therapy by Virginia Axline, play therapists continue to use play as a therapeutic medium to help children express emotions and develop positive relationships and communication skills. Further, play therapy has evolved into many different theoretical approaches and to be of use in many different settings, including schools.

Overall, the origins of play therapy have helped researchers to expand these foundational ideas and create a continuously relevant and modern view of play therapy and how it can benefit children's development. The next section more deeply describes the main theories of child development as they apply to play.

Theories of Child Development

Many theorists' have incorporated their ideas on the importance of play into their theories of child development to clarify play's function for children. Although this may look slightly different for each theorist, the overarching message is consistent—play gives children the opportunity to master their own world as they learn how to create, develop, and maintain their own senses of self (Schaefer, 2011). This section discusses many pioneers of child development, including Freud, Erikson, Piaget, Vygotsky, Bandura and Bowlby and their personal views on the function of play in a child's life.

Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Sigmund Freud first brought the idea of play as a therapeutic modality through his work with Little Hans—a child who was used in Freud's work on his psychoanalytic theory due to his phobia of horses (Freud, 1909). Freud believed that play served three main functions: wish fulfillment, promotion of freer self-expression, and mastery of traumatic events (Schaefer, 2011). Further, Freud proposed that play was one of the primary contributors to ego development. The autonomy of the ego therefore implies that the child's environment helps to shape, nurture, and sustain it. However, one of the crucial tenets of Freudian theory is the idea that the human ego has limits on its malleability, meaning that although the ego is mainly created and sustained by its environment, humans are biologically programmed to seek gratification, making the id and ego ever in control (Horowitz, 1977). Children find both gratification and ego development through play; they are engaging in play activities that satisfy their needs while also encouraging their ego to develop by learning that they are an individual separate from others with their own thoughts, feelings, actions, and needs.

Erikson's psychosocial theory. As a follower of Freud's psychoanalytic theory, Erikson built upon many of Freud's ideas in the creation of his own psychosocial theory of child development. This theory focuses on both a child's development as well as the importance of social interaction as an influence; both are relevant when discussing play. There are seven assumptions which are basic to Erikson's theory: (1) Approach to theory formation; (2) Order of human life; (3) Fundamental human values; (4) Etiology of human behaviour; (5) Core of human functioning; (6) The newborn; and (7) Physical, social, cultural, and ideational environments. Three of these assumptions, numbers one, four and five, directly discuss the importance of play in a child's development and will be discussed in turn.

Approach to theory formation. Erikson relies on psychoanalytic methods and techniques to form his theory. Through the use of these techniques, he asserts that "signals" arise from unconscious and preconscious material through spoken communication in adults and through play behaviour in children (Maier, 1969). While Freud considered the study of one's dreams to be crucial to revealing the unconscious, Erikson argues that studying a child's ego can best be accomplished using play (Maier, 1969).

Etiology of human behaviour. While Freud relied on the main importance of the id in the development and transfiguration of the ego and the superego, Erikson gives more weight and importance to the role of the ego in developing the id and the superego and regards these as the ego's strengths and weaknesses (Maier, 1969). Since in Erikson's theory, the id is no longer the focal point, Freud's theory on defense mechanisms as management of the id's processes loses it's meaning, and the major focus is shifted to the

ego's processes, which include play, speech, thought and actions (Maier, 1969). These processes are regarded as adaptive maneuvers; play as an adaptive maneuver for externalizing inner ego processes (Maier, 1969).

  The core of human functioning. Erikson considers play as one of the ego's major functions and involves three major dimensions, including: (1) the content and underlying theme; (2) verbal and nonverbal communicative components; and (3) play disruption or termination (Maier, 1969). By using play, a child attempts to repeat, master or negate life experiences to create organization and understanding in their inner world which matches their outer world (Maier, 1969). For example, a child who witnessed a domestic violence incident involving a gun may recreate this situation at school by fashioning a gun out of clay and acting out the experience as pretend play with classmates. By doing this, the child tries to make sense of what they witnessed by recreating the experience in a new setting and allows their inner and outer worlds to decide whether this experience needs to be assimilated or accommodated. Overall, play is the ego's mode of self-expression which can help advance a child towards new mastery and new developmental stages (Maier, 1969).

  Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Inherent, unalterable, and evolutionary is how Piaget conceptualized development. This theory is important to note because play therapy techniques can be dependant on a child's development; play must be understood in the context of a child's development to accurately provide appropriate play intervention strategies. Within his conceptualization are four stages: (1) The sensorimotor stage; (2) The preoperational stage; (3) The concrete operation stage; and (4) The formal operation stage. Each stage is described in more detail below.

__The sensorimotor stage__. As the first stage in Piaget's theory, it rightfully describes a child's first two years of life. This stage is predominantly concerned with an infant's physical satisfaction and sensory experience (Maier, 1969). However, Piaget maintains that play is hard to describe at this point, because it depends on an infant's ability to first, master a skill and then, repeat it solely for pleasure (Maier, 1969). As such, play can be identified through repetition of movements and cyclical activities, for example, shaking a rattle—once a mastered skill—can be repeated by an infant as a "happy display of comprehended behaviour" (Maier, 1969, p. 111).

__The preoperational stage__. As a child moves into the preoperational stage of development, between the ages of two and four years, play begins to occupy most of the child's activities (Maier, 1969). The use of play begins to change from an expressive function of the existing environment to a tool of adaptation used to enlarge a child's acquisitions and experiences (Maier, 1969). Play in this stage of development involves a child turning their subjective experiences into play, whether imaginary or symbolic (Maier, 1969). Through repetition of this imaginary and symbolic play, it eventually begins to evolve into play which is a realistic representation of the child's social world (Maier, 1969). As the child's development progresses throughout this stage, children between the ages of four and seven surround themselves with play that is mostly social (Maier, 1969). Further, children in this stage can extend their symbolic imagination and are able to role play individuals other than themselves; play is done in relation to other people and shows organizational thinking in which a child can think in terms of others (Maier, 1969). Play also begins to enact the rules and values taught to the child by elders;

however, these rules are generalized, and the child tends to view these laws as absolute (Maier, 1969).

The concrete operations stage. Once a child reaches the concrete operations stage of development, between the ages of seven and eleven, play transforms from a means of self-expression into a media for understanding the physical and social aspects of the world (Maier, 1969). Due to the child's developed morals and values, collective games normally involve highly structured play with rules that are universal amongst all the children; play is less about curiosity and expression and more about cognitive thought and intellectual experimentation (Maier, 1969).

The formal operations stage. The last stage of child development outlined by Piaget occurs between the ages of 11 and 15. At this point in development, children move away from formal play and socialization and relationships with others take precedent (Maier, 1969). Play is no longer a major focus in this developmental stage. Overall, by understanding the stages of cognitive child development as proposed by Piaget, teachers, counsellors, and parents can understand the underlying meaning of a child's play throughout the stages.

Vygotsky's theory of child development. In many ways, Vygotsky's theory of child development built upon both the work of Erikson and Piaget previously discussed. He believed that a child's personal and social world could not be separated, and instead, that they work together and build upon each other to develop a child's unique knowledge, viewpoint, and understanding of the world and themselves (Mooney, 2013). More specifically, Vygotsky posed that the development of play involved many intricate aspects of language, meaning, and learning, discussed below.

Play and meaning. Vygotsky understood that when children play, they are constantly using language and interacting with others. He believed that language and social interaction worked together to contribute to a child's construction of knowledge— in other words, their learning (Mooney, 2013). This realization was the basis for much of Vygotsky's work on his theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP) which involves a child's interaction with others to learn how to complete a difficult task, gradually, on their own (Mooney, 2013). Further, much of Vygotsky's work on the meaning of play involved a child's 'pretend play'. For example, a group of children building a fort and using sticks as swords would be participating in pretend play; the children could be pretending the fort is a castle and they are the knights defending it with their swords. The action of pretend play is made possible because a child is learning to separate the visual field from the field of meaning (Smidt, 2009). Vygotsky called this the *decontextualization of meaning*; in other words, "the ability to think about something even when the thing is not evident or present" (Smidt, 2009, p. 105). This step, Vygotsky poses, is the beginning of a child's journey towards the development of higher mental functions and verbal thinking (Smidt, 2009). Overall, Vygotsky's main contribution to the field of psychology and education is understanding the importance of children's interaction with adults and peers during play and throughout their early years to successfully advance their learning—both cognitively and socially.

Albert Bandura's social learning theory. This theory is important to consider due to the learning setting in which this project will take place: schools. Social learning theory emphasizes the important influence of modeling on behaviour and learning; Bandura (1976) poses that it would be both laborious and hazardous if people had to rely

solely on the effects of their own actions for learning, therefore, much of human

behaviour is learned through observation of others followed by modeling this behaviour

if a positive outcome is present. More specifically, in young children, imitation and

modeling are mostly confined to "instantaneous imitation" because they are unable to

symbolize their experience and translate it into a motor modality, which is crucial for

delayed modeling (Bandura, 1976, p. 30). For example, a preschool child may witness

another classmate running circles around the classroom during free play and immediately

join in the behaviour. If the child had not observed this behaviour in the first place, it

would be unlikely that they would perform this behaviour spontaneously on their own.

Reinforcement in observational learning. Bandura poses that reinforcement

plays a large role in observational learning as a facilitative condition. However, it is more

likely that reinforcement influences learning as an antecedent rather than consequent

(Bandura, 1976). In other words, if a child's modeling behaviour is reinforced, it is more

likely that other children will observe and model the same behaviour as opposed to if the

behaviour is ignored or punished. Further, if benefits of a behaviour are anticipated (such

as praise from a teacher for a positive behaviour), retention of the observed behaviour is

strengthened through coding and rehearsal, so an individual is more likely to imitate a

behaviour in the future (Bandura, 1976). These findings promote the importance of

reinforcing positive behaviours to achieve a desired behavioural outcome among many

children.

Bowlby's attachment theory of human development. Attachment theory, as

developed by John Bowlby, focuses on the bond between a caregiver and a care seeker to

establish security and coping skills. Although attachment may not contain any direct ties

to play and play behaviour in children, this theory is important to note when discussing

the effectiveness of play therapy techniques in a preschool classroom, as a child's

attachment style may interact with the outcome of the intervention. Regardless, Bowlby

describes attachment is a system of regulation in which caregivers and care seekers

maintain an accessible relationship for support and comfort, especially during times of

stress (Bowlby, 1988). As such, attachment theory provides a powerful system of

connection between people (Riley, 2011). Attachment theory can be broken down into

several different main themes including attachment behaviour, attachment bond, and

types of attachment. Each theme is discussed in more detail below.

 Attachment behaviour. While attachment is the bond between a caregiver and a

care seeker, attachment behaviour involves the actions the care seeker uses to remain

close in proximity to the caregiver (Riley, 2011). This behaviour can be triggered in the

care seeker by either actual or perceived separation from the caregiver; it is especially

obvious when the care seeker is frightened, sick, or fatigued (Riley, 2011). The most

obvious example is the attachment bond between a mother and child. Since a child is

often reliant on their mother for survival, these attachment behaviours are key to

maintaining a proximal relationship. Overall, the attachment behaviours performed by a

care seeker ensures that the caregiver is available and responsive, which, in turn, ensures

feelings of security within the care seeker (Bowlby, 1988).

 Attachment bond. Similarly, to the reasoning behind the need for attachment

behaviours, the attachment bond also ensures that a care seeker remains near the

caregiver, which is essential for survival. However, while the attachment behaviours

performed by care seekers seem to be innate, an attachment bond develops through

repeated exposure (Riley, 2011). This main bond, which Bowlby refers to as the *affectual bond*, works as the basis for a baby's future relationships. This affectual bond changes over time throughout the lifespan as a baby grows and develops, meets new milestones, and learns through experience (Riley, 2011).

     Types of attachment. By the age of three, a child's attachment style is established based on the responses and experiences provided to them by their caregiver; a child is either securely or insecurely attached to their caregiver. A secure attachment involves a caregiver responding consistently and predictably to the child's needs, which allows the child to gradually develop confidence and independence (Riley, 2011). On the other hand, an insecure attachment, which can be classified as either avoidant or ambivalent, involves a caregiver responding unpredictably; leading to a child attempting to minimize their unmet needs to avoid experiencing the pain of separation (Riley, 2011). Both insecure attachment styles lead to a person who may be distrustful of others, as well as their own feelings about relationships, and are more likely to become defensive to protect themselves from pain (Riley, 2011). In an avoidant attachment style, a person may to convince themselves that they do not have attachment needs, while in an ambivalent attachment style, a person may become clingy and controlling in intimate relationships (Riley, 2011).

     Overall, attachment style, as proposed by Bowlby, is important to include in this review of literature due to its relation to the outcome of the implementation of play therapy techniques with preschool children. By being mindful of how attachment style affects the effectiveness of play therapy techniques, it can be ensured that each child achieves the best outcome possible.

Summary

Overall, by outlining the theories by Erikson, Piaget, Vygotsky, Bandura, and Bowlby in relation to their views on the importance of play, a basis for the present project and its roots has been developed. While Erikson believed that play inspired a child's development of their ego and conscience internally, Piaget posed that a child's play helps them develop and understand their social world, externally. Vygotsky furthered these two theorist's ideas and combined them; children's play is a catalyst for both their cognitive and social learning and development. Bandura took social learning a step further and posed that children's play is dependent on aspects of observation, imitation, and reinforcement. Finally, Bowlby's theory of attachment, which states that a child's attachment bond to their caregiver is dependant on their attachment style later in life, is important to include due to the ways in which attachment style can affect the ways a child responds to play therapy techniques.

Play Therapy Modalities

Over the years of research and expansion of the psychological theories with relevance to a child's play, several forms of play therapy evolved, including client-centred, Adlerian, non-directive, and cognitive-behavioural, which are discussed below.

Client-centred play therapy. Client-centred or child-centred play therapy is favoured by play therapists when the child and therapist may come from different cultural backgrounds; it emphasizes the importance of the therapist taking on the child's view (Porter, Hernandez-Reif, & Jessee, 2009). The main premise of child-centred play therapy includes the core conditions for therapeutic change that were developed by Carl

Rogers (1961), including empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard. This mode of play therapy also reflects Axline's (1974) eight principles of play therapy, which built off Rogers' work, including 1) develop a friendly relationship, 2) accept the child without question, 3) establish the relationship as permissive so that the child can freely express their feelings, 4) recognize and reflect the child's feelings, 5) maintain respect for the child's problem-solving skills, 6) let the child lead and avoid directing the child, 7) let the session progress naturally, without an agenda, and 8) make only necessary limitations (Porter, Hernandez-Reif, & Jessee, 2009). Overall, the goal of this modality is for the therapist to see the world through the child's eyes. Child-centred play therapy is especially useful with elementary school students because of its ability to engage a child at a developmental level using their own unique language (Drewes & Schaefer, 2010). However, school counsellors may struggle to implement this play therapy modality due to time constraints; many school counsellors are too busy to be able to see a child once a week to deliver child-centred play therapy.

Adlerian play therapy. Adlerian play therapy is based off the work of Alfred Adler and involves a child-led approach which promotes a supportive environment in which the child feels encouraged and accepted, allowing them to develop trust and learning through their expressed feelings (Porter, Hernandez-Reif, & Jessee, 2009). This approach is helpful for children who feel that their responses do not matter to adults, and can also target several forms of misbehaviour, such as attention, power, revenge, and feelings of insufficiency (Porter, Hernandez-Reif, & Jessee, 2009). Finally, Adlerian play therapy is also appropriate for children who have suffered trauma; by using the play process, children can repair broken relationships and how to interact with adults (Porter,

Hernandez-Reif, & Jessee, 2009). This approach is ideal in school settings for its ability to target maladaptive behaviours by offering suggestions to teachers and parents, however, this could also be the approach's downfall as it may be difficult to get parents and teachers on board and involved in the process.

Non-directive play therapy. Non-directive play therapy is often used to help develop a child's speech and language development. Further, it can be used in many different settings and modalities, such as in a child's home or school, and in individual or group settings (Porter, Hernandez-Reif, & Jessee, 2009). Non-directive play therapy involves the therapist mirroring and verbalizing the child's actions or behaviours in simple language, which provides the child with opportunities to listen and learn language associated with their activities (Porter, Hernandez-Reif, & Jessee, 2009). While this type of approach is useful for language development and could be utilized in schools with students who are learning English as a second language, it may be more effective at treating other behavioural difficulties when used in tandem with other methods.

Cognitive-behavioural play therapy. Cognitive-behavioural therapy most commonly focuses on verbal communication and making positive self-statements. Play is utilized to discover and develop a child's strengths so that they can in turn, develop strong, healthy coping mechanisms (Porter, Hernandez-Reif, & Jessee, 2009). Some techniques that are used in this approach include modeling, role playing, and desensitization, as well as homework activities that could include self-monitoring, confronting irrational thoughts, and positive reinforcement (Drewes & Schaefer, 2010). Further, this type of play therapy has been successful at treating severe separation anxiety by facilitating cognitive change (Porter, Hernandez-Reif, & Jessee, 2009) through

specific techniques and treatment goals based on assessment of undesired behaviour. On one hand, cognitive-behavioural play therapy is useful because it narrowly focuses on a presenting problem and provides strategies for change; making it very time-efficient. On the other hand, the assessment of a child's behavioural symptoms and development of treatment goals may be time-consuming

Summary

Overall, the main play therapy approaches—Child-Centred, Adlerian, Non-directive, and Cognitive-Behavioural—are all perspectives that can be utilized depending on the presenting problem and desired outcome. Although each approach has different roots and areas of strength and weakness, all these approaches have a common goal; allowing children to learn and grow through play. Further, all these approaches are useful in many different settings—including schools. The next section discusses school-based play therapy's function and role in early childhood education.

Play Therapy Settings

Several main areas of implementation will be addressed in this section; mainly, a traditional office setting, and a school-based setting. This comparison provides the similarities and differences that exist between these two settings. The school-based setting then discusses the function of play therapy in early childhood education—specifically, within preschool and kindergarten classrooms. Then, the existing issues within early childhood classrooms are discussed, including social-emotional wellbeing and aggressive, externalizing, and disruptive behaviours, with play therapy as a possible solution.

Office-based play therapy. One of the more traditional methods of play therapy takes place in an office setting; most likely in a professional counsellor, child psychologist, or play therapist's office. It is important that the playroom where children are seen by a play therapist in an office setting conveys an environment that is warm, friendly and welcoming; children are more likely to feel comfortable in this environment (Landreth, 2002). Since the process of play therapy involves communication with a child through toys, it is important to select play items and materials with purpose. Items must facilitate expression, engage a child's interests, and allow for exploration with success without prescribed structure (Landreth, 2002). Typically, when held in an office setting, play therapy sessions are one-on-one with a child and play therapist and sessions can range anywhere from 30 minutes to 2 hours in length. Through these sessions, the play therapist works to establish a positive relationship with the child, which contains many aspects that are essential to successful play therapy as outlined by Gary Landreth (2002). First, to express a wide range of feelings. This can be promoted using puppets; children are able to express their feelings without feeling threatened because the puppet acts as a conduit for expression. Second, to explore real-life experiences. When children have access to items such as a toy gun or a medical kit, they are given the opportunity to recreate life experiences in a safe, comfortable setting which trims their experience to a manageable size so they can process it correctly. Third, to test limits. Children are able to test the limits of their relationship with the play therapist to help learn appropriate boundaries. Next, to develop a positive self-image and self-understanding. In the playroom, children are provided with materials that they can manipulate, such as clay, paint, and blocks, which they can use to learn that they are able to do things on their own

and be successful. As the play therapist teaches the child that they will accept them unconditionally, this fosters a sense of self-understanding for the child when their feelings are accepted and reflected by the therapist. Finally, play therapy should provide an opportunity to develop self-control. The interaction between the therapist and the child helps to foster a child's responsibility to make their own decisions, to choose without fear or guidance, and set their own limits. Overall, by ensuring a warm, well-organized playroom, play therapists who work in office settings can provide their child clients a sense of calm and familiarity, a place where they are able to express themselves freely in order to successfully foster all important elements of the therapeutic process.

School-based play therapy. Along with the multitude of applications for play therapy, there is also an entire field of research and techniques dedicated to counsellors and psychologists who wish to integrate play therapy into their current school counselling program. While school counsellors often have the same goals for play therapy as within an office setting, when they are considering integrating play therapy into their school counselling practice, careful planning is essential. School counsellors may be interested in using several play therapy methods—such as empathic listening, modelling, and role play—to assist children in the development of self-confidence, mastery, social skills, problem-solving skills, as well as healthy coping skills (Curry & Fazio-Griffith, 2013). Methods of play intervention may include unstructured play, drama, dance, art, music, and games (Curry & Fazio-Griffith, 2013). There are also several different modalities in which play therapy can be implemented. While individual and small group counselling interventions are both useful for several reasons, school counsellors are encouraged to be mindful of the developmental considerations of their student population (Curry & Fazio-

Griffith, 2013). Further, due to play therapy's culturally responsive nature, this intervention is useful for working with children and adolescents from different cultural backgrounds and those who may be refugees from other countries (Drewes & Schaefer, 2010). For example, the Hispanic population within the United States has grown exponentially, and thus, schools are seeing many externalizing behaviour difficulties with children from a Hispanic background (Garza & Bratton, 2005). By using a school-based child-centred play therapy modality, researchers were able to provide some evidence that CCPT had a large treatment effect on externalizing behaviours (Garza & Bratton, 2005). Further, according to results collected through parent report measures, findings were consistent with other studies which provided evidence that children who received the CCPT treatment experienced significantly less conduct problem behaviours (Garza & Bratton, 2005). By conducting play therapy interventions within a school setting, school counsellors are preparing students, from all backgrounds and diversities, to learn (Drewes & Schaefer, 2010). Schools are also an ideal setting to implement intervention when many children today are at-risk due to situations they may be exposed to at home (Drewes & Schaefer, 2010). Despite the many positives for implementing play therapy into school counselling settings, many barriers have been identified by school counsellors that hinder the progress of integrating these interventions throughout schools. Lack of time with students, lack of training in play therapy, lack of facilities, lack of supplies, time consuming activities which are non-counselling related, lack of administrative support, and belief that play therapy is ineffective have all been named as barriers (Drewes & Schaefer, 2010).

Play Therapy in Early Childhood Education

While many areas of research have examined the effectiveness of play therapy in various disorders, circumstances, age groups, and settings, the need for more research in play therapy interventions in relation to early childhood education—i.e., in preschool and kindergarten—is only now being addressed. Boyer (2016) outlines how person-centred therapy (PCT) can be implemented into early childhood education, because many of the underlying beliefs and principles about both PCT and early childhood education are similar. The important social and emotional attributes required to become successful begin development in childhood, which is why early childhood educators are normally burdened with the task of helping to establish behavioural and emotional regulation in their students (Boyer, 2016). Similarly, PCT is concerned with the faith and empowerment of human beings to be able and willing to connect with others, both socially and emotionally (Boyer, 2016). Rogers (1957) outlined six core principles needed to promote positive personality changes, including: (a) interpersonal contact; (b) client incongruence; (c) counsellor congruence; (d) counsellor genuineness; (e) counsellor empathic understanding; and (f) counsellor unconditional positive regard. These core conditions, when applied to an early childhood classroom, promote positive change in children because they are in an environment in which they are nurtured, understood, and appreciated (Boyer, 2016). Further, the specific roles of the counsellor and early childhood educator are remarkably similar; these two groups of people share the ability to be genuinely present, accessible, engaged, interested and focused on the immediate experience of the child or client (Boyer, 2016). While counsellors must often engage in empathy to understand what it must be like to be their client, early childhood educators often imagine what it must be like to be the child and what their emotions are

to better understand the child's social and emotional support needs (Boyer, 2016).

Overall, Axline (1974) indicated that the most important factor in supporting the mental

health of children within schools is through relationship building. Therefore, if early

childhood educators are given the knowledge, tools and techniques to establish positive

relationships with their children, they can be just as effective as counsellors at providing

positive development of numerous traits which will guarantee a child's success later in

life.

    Social-emotional wellbeing. Many studies in the field of play therapy have

focused on the effects of various forms of play therapy intervention on a child's social-

emotional skills and wellbeing. Such early childhood interventions have addressed many

areas of concern for children in the early stages of development. At-risk preschool

children who develop social and emotional pathology have a higher chance of being

previously exposed to adverse childhood events (ACEs) such as witnessed domestic

violence, have an incarcerated parent, or experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse, or

neglect (Tucker et al., 2017). Therefore, by implementing effective early intervention

programs that help to increase social-emotional resiliency, the effects of ACEs may be

mitigated in young children (Tucker et al., 2017). This is one of many reasons behind the

implementation of Head Start programs across the United States; a program in which

individualized intervention is provided to preschool-aged children within a school

environment using adult-led play, gentle touch, eye contact, and movement (Tucker et al.,

2017). Initial outcomes of qualitative data collected from teachers who participated in the

Sunshine Circle (SC) preschool intervention, which was adapted from the Theraplay

model used in Head Start programs, showed positive reports including improved social

interaction among students, fewer disciplinary issues, and more cohesive relationships between teachers and students (Tucker et al., 2017). By having school teachers implement the program, such interventions often promote safe, caring, engaging and participatory learning environments for children with social-emotional difficulties; these environments help to build student attachment to school, as well as motivate them to learn and produce higher academic achievement (Zinsser, Shewark, Denham, & Curby, 2014). Unfortunately, there are several limitations to applying social-emotional interventions within school settings, including scarcity of resources, lack of effective implementation, failure to attend to each student's specific needs, and inappropriate activities based on the children's developmental stages (Cheng & Ray, 2016). Overall, by increasing effective and manageable interventions aimed to increase social-emotional learning and development in young children, such as the Sunshine Circle, Head Start, and Child-Centred Group Play Therapy, both parents and educators are involved in developing highly effective social and emotional traits and resiliency in their children.

Aggressive, externalizing, and disruptive behaviours. There are several recent studies which address the effectiveness of various play therapy methods at reducing unwanted behaviours, such as aggression, externalizing and off-task behaviours, and child disruptive behavioural disorders. One study conducted by Jarareh, Mohammadi, Nader, and Moosavian (2016) investigated the effectiveness of group play therapy on creativity and aggression control in preschool children. A significant effect on enhancing creativity and reducing aggression was found in children in the experimental group after participation in 10 one-hour sessions of group play therapy (Jarareh et. al., 2016). Further, participation in group therapy allows children to externalize their emotions and

express their anxiety through play which, in turn, has a significant effect on a child's

ability to control their feelings and stress because they can learn anger management

skills, effective communication skills, and positive ways of externalizing their aggression

(Jarareh et al., 2016). Similarly, a study by Ray, Schottelkorb and Tsai (2007) on the

effectiveness of Child-Centred Play Therapy with children with symptoms of Attention-

Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) found similar results. Sixty elementary school

children were randomly assigned to either a CCPT group or a reading mentor group.

After 16 sessions of individual CCPT over 16 weeks, a significant effect was found over

time and a positive change in ADHD symptoms (Ray, Schottelkorb, & Tsai, 2007).

However, there was no significant difference found between the two groups, indicating

that it is possible that both the reading mentor and play therapy group had equally

positive impacts on students with ADHD symptoms (Ray, Schottelkorb, & Tsai, 2007).

Therefore, researchers were hesitant to report that play therapy is an effective treatment

for ADHD symptoms, indicating that it is possible that these changes occurred entirely

due to the passing of time (Ray, Schottelkorb, & Tsai, 2007). Finally, a further look into

the effectiveness of Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) at reducing disruptive

behaviour disorders was done through a meta-analysis by Ward, Theule and Cheung

(2016) including 12 studies which met the rigorous inclusion criteria. Including parents in

the play therapy process has supported the effectiveness of the intervention; by teaching

parent's effective ways to interact with their children, it is more likely that children will

receive similar interactions at home, in therapy, and in school settings, enhancing its

overall effectiveness (Ward, Theule, & Cheung, 2016). The results of this meta-analysis

provide support for the effectiveness of PCIT by demonstrating the significant effects that

the intervention produced at decreasing externalizing behaviour problems in children (Ward, Theule, & Cheung, 2016). Overall, the effectiveness of several new research studies on play therapy as an intervention for child aggression and externalizing behaviours seems promising; by including both parents and educators in play therapy interventions designed to reduce the occurrence of aggressive, disruptive, and externalizing behaviours, children are provided with a more holistic treatment intervention.

Summary

To summarize, much of the previous literature from influential theorists has areas which focus on the importance of play for a child cognitively, emotionally, and socially. Further, the various modalities in which play therapy has been implemented, such as Adlerian or Child-centred, increases the ways play therapy can be incorporated into schools. These various modalities allow play therapy techniques to be personalized based on each child's unique, specific needs. Finally, current literature and research on the effectiveness of play therapy and play therapy in early childhood education has revolved around the effectiveness of play therapy in reducing difficult behaviours and trauma and increasing children's social and emotional wellbeing (Jarareh, Mohammadi, Nader, & Moosavian, 2016; Tucker et. al., 2017; Ward, Theule, & Cheung, 2016). Therefore, it is imperative that more research be conducted to bridge the gap between play therapy, and it's use in preschool and kindergarten classrooms. In the meantime, by providing a succinct, detailed workshop and manual to school counsellors, they can become more confident and prepared to begin implementing play therapy techniques alongside other educators. By doing this, school counsellors and educators will be proactively providing

young children with strategies to support healthy, positive, learning and development

which will emphasize resiliency and decrease the likelihood that they will need further

play therapy in the future.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter discusses the intended research process used to complete the project. Through the formation of an extensive review of literature, the main goal of this final project is to bridge the gap between play therapy and early childhood education. By doing so, this final project can accurately inform school counsellors with a workshop and manual which will help them utilize teachers and early childhood educators to implement play therapy techniques in preschool and kindergarten classrooms. While the previous chapters have outlined the introduction and literature review, this chapter outlines the various databases and search terms used to accumulate relevant research for this project. Then, the ethical considerations and editorial standards are discussed, as well as the benefits and impacts associated with the final project and some implications for educators that are important to consider. Finally, an overview of the workshop and manual provides general information such as intentions, format, and goals are outlined.

Research Focus

Research for the extensive literature review was collected from a variety of sources including peer-reviewed journal articles, books and media. Play therapy was originally developed in 1970; in order to capture both the original play therapy perspectives as well as the most modern, up-to-date information relevant to play therapy, no search limits were placed on publication year. Further, no restrictions were placed on publication location for the searched literature. When compiling research for the review of relevant literature, academic journals were sought out from several online databases including EBSCOhost, PsycINFO, Ovid, ScienceDirect, and SAGE. To ensure a large

breadth of articles were included in the research, many different search terms were included, such as: *play therapy*, *play therapy techniques*, *school play therapy*, *preschool play therapy*, *non-directive play therapy*, *group play therapy*, and *implementing play therapy*. Further, theorist names were searched in order to find print material available at the university library. These terms included: *Freud's psychoanalytic theory, Piaget's theory of cognitive development, Vygotsky's theory of child development, Bandura's social learning theory,* and *Bowlby's attachment theory of human development.* The material that was accessed through the above databases included journal articles, books, and other grey material both in print and online. Through this data research and collection, rich, detailed information was collected to aid in the creation of a useful workshop and manual for school counsellors.

Project Assembly

This final project document was assembled with the help of an initial project proposal document. Once the project proposal was approved, work began to add more detail and extend the literature review to include all relevant and important areas. Through the development of the literature review, ideas for the creation of the workshop and manual arose. It was the literature review which then informed the creation of the workshop and facilitator's manual. The manual was created first and organized into sections. Then, research allowed the author to compile play therapy activities which were easy to implement into classrooms and with large numbers of students, with little to no advanced preparation. This manual was reviewed by four Early Childhood Educators during the writing process in order to ensure that the information provided in the manual was easy to understand and useful to implement. Feedback from these educators allowed

for the editing and development of the final manual. Finally, the school counsellor workshop was created last to ensure all important and relevant information from both the main document and the manual were included. This workshop was created in a PowerPoint format for attendees to easily read and understand the information presented. Finally, chapter four of the main document was completed last, then final editing was completed after the entire project was read and edited by a second reader.

Ethical Considerations

This project did not gather qualitative or quantitative data from research participants and therefore, approval from the Human Subjects Research Committee at the University of Lethbridge was not necessary. However, this project was created with the intention of respecting the dignity of all persons, as outlined in the ethical standards of the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* (Sinclair & Pettifor, 2001). This code of ethics was taken into consideration throughout the creation of this project.

Editorial Standards

The editorial standards of this project were maintained through the use of the *American Psychological Association Publication Manual 6th Edition* (American Psychological Association, 2010). However, creative liberties were used in the manual portion of the project in order to present the material in an easy to read and appealing fashion, such as with different font styles and colours, and the inclusion of pictures. Pictures used were taken from Microsoft Office Clip Board and cited accordingly.

Benefits and Impacts Associated with the Final Project

Many important and relevant parties are affected through the use and implementation of this final project. These parties also encompass the target audiences for the present project. First, this project helps to address the gap between counselling and education within preschool and kindergarten children; school counsellors who partake in the workshop may become more effective counsellors if they are successfully able to implement a play therapy technique into a preschool or kindergarten classroom. Second, this project helps address the gap between counselling and education through the inclusion of teachers and early childhood educators in the implementation process and with play therapy techniques in the classroom. Teachers and early childhood educators may feel more in control of their classroom and decrease their stress levels because of managed student behaviour. Third, parents will benefit from both the techniques being used with their children and the information they are provided with about the techniques, so that they can continue similar intervention strategies at home, creating a more collaborative and engaged program which is maintained across settings. It is common knowledge that programs that are maintained across multiple settings have shown to have more impact on a child because they are constantly receiving the same intervention, regardless of whether they are at school or at home. This leads into the final—and arguably, most important—population which is affected by the implementation of this final project. The preschool and kindergarten students who participate in the play therapy techniques will gain healthy development in many areas including social relationships, emotional intelligence, positive behavioural attributes, coping skills, and educational achievement.

Implications for Educators

Finally, it is important to discuss how the use of play therapy within preschool and kindergarten classrooms will affect educators. For one, educators will need to understand how play contributes to the development of a student's social and emotional intelligence. Since many forms of play, specifically, pretend play, typically involves socialization with others, play gives students real-life examples and experiences in which to develop important social skills such as manners, body awareness, non-verbal language cues, and language skills (Drewes & Schaefer, 2010). Pretend play also provides students with the opportunity to learn about and discuss the emotions of themselves and others. Secondly, the use of play therapy techniques in early childhood classrooms will allow educators to help provide assessment of students' skills related to both social-emotional behaviour and learning ability (Drewes & Schaefer, 2010). When play therapy techniques utilized within the classroom are developmentally appropriate, it is easier and more convenient to be able to spot children who may be falling behind developmentally; if they are not able to complete some play therapy activities similarly to their peers, this may be an indication that extra help, support, or remediation is needed. This provides a more broad-based assessment of a students' skills across multiple school-based settings (i.e., on the playground, within the classroom, during free play, etc.) which can be useful when creating and implementing an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) (Schaefer & Drewes, 2010). Finally, by including play therapy techniques within early childhood educational curriculum, educators may notice an improvement in their classroom's student cohesion, behaviours, and overall efficiency. When students are given the opportunity to enhance their social and emotional skills, educators may find an increase in problem solving, social skills, stress management, and emotional awareness and expression. This allows

classrooms to run more smoothly and ensures that students are having repeatedly more positive interactions and experiences. Overall, this final project—by including educators within the play therapy process—has indicated that there are many benefits and implications for educators if they participate in the goal to increase the social and emotional learning in their classrooms.

Workshop Overview

The content included in the workshop component of this project aims to provide school counsellors with both a breadth and depth of the uses of play therapy and how they can be implemented into preschool and kindergarten programs. Therefore, school counsellors who attend the workshop will have access to content such as useful play therapy techniques, implementation strategies, adaptation for inclusion, example scenarios of how to implement these strategies, and how to include teachers, early childhood educators, and parents in the implementation process. Further, school counsellors will be provided with an overview of the history of play therapy and how it relates to child development during the preschool years. Other important topics will also be addressed throughout the workshop, such as ethical issues and concerns (i.e., the need for parental consent), the importance of supervision, when to ask for help or collaborate with others for help (i.e., certified Play Therapists, Educational Assistants, and school Principals), and outcomes of the implementation process. The workshop is comprised of a full day of instruction, between the hours of 9am and 4pm, with one hour being excluded for participants to have lunch. Generally, the morning of the workshop will contain all necessary background information on play therapy (i.e., history, relation to child development) and the afternoon will focus on the implementation of play therapy

into school classrooms (i.e., practicing techniques, discussing activities and handouts). Overall, this workshop will be presented to attending school counsellors in a PowerPoint format, and therefore, this PowerPoint is also included within the project.

The main intention of this workshop is that school counsellors will become more informed about the techniques and supports that are available to help increase healthy child development socially, emotionally, behaviourally, and educationally so that they can ultimately learn how to implement play therapy techniques in preschool and kindergarten settings.

Manual Overview

The accompanying manual which is made available to all school counsellors who participate in the workshop includes a large variety of content; some of which will be addressed within the workshop, and some that serves to extend school counsellor's abilities into the future. For example, a brief history on play therapy and its usefulness in child development in the preschool years will be discussed in the workshop, but also included in the manual. The manual also includes all the play therapy techniques discussed in the workshop, as well as implementation strategies and uses of the techniques with specific populations of preschool children (i.e., children with disabilities, children who are ESL, children with aggressive behaviour). This manual includes adaptation strategies for many of the activities in order to ensure children of all abilities, cultural backgrounds, and family origins can participate and learn. Further, implementation examples, parent and teacher consent and information forms, and handouts and worksheets for the students is also included in the manual. The manual is written at an accessible level; difficult to understand "jargon" is not included, so that it

can be read by those of a variety of different education levels including early childhood

educators, school counsellors, teachers, parents, and principals. All play therapy

techniques and activities are appropriately cited to ensure credit is given to the original

authors. Overall, this facilitator's manual is around 60 pages long, including all resources,

activities, handouts, and forms.

Overall, the main intention of this school counsellor manual for implementing

play therapy techniques is to enable school counsellors to feel supported, well-guided and

well-prepared to utilize these techniques within their school. By providing this manual, it

is hoped that school counsellors will feel competent addressing preschool and

kindergarten difficulties and establishing play therapy techniques as a solution to

unwanted behaviour and to increase healthy child development.

Chapter Four: Discussion

This chapter discusses the final elements of the workshop and manual of the final project; mainly, the strengths and limitations, as well as the areas of future research. To summarize, this final project's focus was to bridge the gap between two distinct areas: play therapy and early childhood education. This was accomplished through the creation of a play therapy techniques workshop and manual for school counsellors to successfully help teachers and early childhood educators implement play therapy into their preschool and kindergarten classrooms. The play therapy techniques workshop was designed to be implemented as a full-day workshop for school counsellors in which they are given background information on child development, the main tenets of play therapy, and ways of implementing these strategies into preschool and kindergarten classrooms through play therapy activities. Attendees are given the opportunity to ask questions, practice implementation strategies, brainstorm adaptions, utilize new skills, and bond with other school counsellors who may be facing similar strengths and weaknesses within their school role. At the workshop, attendees will also be given a play therapy techniques manual which aims to supplement their learning and allow them to carry forth the information necessary to implement play therapy techniques. This manual contains implementation strategies, play therapy activities, bibliotherapy ideas, parent information forms, and student handouts. Further, in order to make the manual and its activities as inclusive as possible, adaptations are included with many of the play therapy activities so children of all languages, abilities, and family situations are able to participate the best they can.

Strengths

There are many prominent strengths associated with this final project. The first major strength is that this project has been thoroughly researched using a large variety of primary and secondary literature from many diverse sources. Further, by collecting a large variation of literature from both past and present, this final project is firmly rooted in early theories of child development and play therapy. This allows readers to understand the original theories and how they have changed and developed further over time towards the present and future theories of the importance of play in a child's life.

Another strength of this final project is its emphasis on increasing classroom inclusion. By creating a manual that can be implemented with an entire preschool or kindergarten class, all children are able to benefit from the learning activities regarding emotional expression, stress management, problem solving and social skills. This proactive approach ensures that children who are at risk of needing specialized therapy later in life are being given an intervention before more serious problems arise, but also enhances the learning and development of all children. This in turn, leads to another strength of the final project, which is the facilitation of social-emotional growth in preschool and kindergarten children. Since many theorists and researchers have expressed that the preschool and kindergarten years are important due to the development of a child's self-concept, coping mechanisms, and social skills (Cheng & Ray, 2016; Tucker, Schieffer, Wills, Hull, & Murphy, 2017), this final project successfully targets preschool and kindergarten children with easy, fun, and meaningful play therapy activities which help to increase learning and growth during this stage of life.

Additionally, this final project presents support for school counsellors, teachers, and early childhood educators. The workshop and manual presented in this final project allows these educators the opportunity to collaborate and work together to provide children with useful strategies for managing difficult behaviour, and increasing social skills, stress management, and classroom cohesion. By increasing collaboration, school counsellors can reduce their individual workload, manage a larger student body effectively, and decrease work stress. Teachers and early childhood educators will also benefit; they are involved in a highly-effective process of creating a more beneficial school environment in which all children are receiving the specialized treatment that they need, while also enhancing the social and emotional skills of the entire class. As such, teachers and early childhood educators may find less behavioural difficulties within their classroom, allowing them to utilize their time more effectively.

Finally, this final project is adaptable so that it can be used in all preschool and kindergarten classrooms, regardless of the class's unique structure, strengths and difficulties. The manual is structured in a way that educators can quickly find which activities will be more useful to them and are provided with adaptations that can be made to the chosen activities in order to include as many children as possible. Since many of the play therapy activities compiled in the manual are originally used with culturally responsive child-centred play therapy, there are many activities that can be used regardless of a child's cultural background and primary language; as strength that is constantly increasing in value as Canada's cultural diversity grows.

Limitations

While the previous section outlined the final project's strengths, the major limitation to the manual and workshop of this final project is that it has not gone under rigorous scientific testing to ensure its effectiveness; since this manual and workshop does not follow and former evidence-based practice, it does not reach the gold-standard in counselling.

Further, this final project does not contain any components that would collect constructive feedback from its users. While a survey could be created to allow the workshop's leader to collect feedback regarding the workshop from attendees, the manual does not contain any pre-made surveys in order to assess the manual's usefulness from school counsellors, teachers, and early childhood educators.

The final limitation to this final project is that is has not been created with the input of an expert in the field of play therapy or child development. Without this professional input, the workshop and manual rely solely on the author's practical knowledge and research on the subject, leaving room for error, misinformation, and gaps in important literature.

Areas of Future Research

There are several opportunities for future research and development. In terms of this final project, it would be beneficial to conduct a study on the effectiveness of the PlaySchooler manual and if it promotes positive change in preschool and kindergarten classrooms. Further, the workshop for school counsellors could benefit from attendee feedback in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the workshop's structure, content, and opportunity for collaboration and support from other school counsellors.

Many past longitudinal studies have found evidence to suggest that behavioural problems that begin in preschool can persist well into a child's later developmental years (Campbell, 2002). A study conducted by Richman, Stevenson and Graham (1982) concluded that problems such as overactivity, inattention, difficult to control, and irritability in clinically significant measures of behaviour in three-year-olds persisted over time; 63% of the group at age four and 62% at age eight. Similarly, children who were tested for lack of control at age three were more likely to have more externalizing problems at ages nine, eleven, thirteen, and fifteen based on parent and teacher reports (Caspi, Henry, McGee, Moffitt, & Silva, 1995). While many causes of such longitudinal results are given, such as perinatal characteristics, early family risk, poor parenting, and child characteristics, very few programs have been implemented at the preschool age to mediate these risk factors. Parents are often told that their child will outgrow certain behavioural difficulties and are given general behavioural management procedures; leaving the responsibility on the parents to get their child any extra support they may need during school hours. This lack of responsibility on the school's part makes comprehensive treatment programs almost nonexistent (Campbell, 2002). In the future, therapeutic preschool programs that focus on providing children appropriate treatment for negative behaviours such as inattention, hyperactivity, aggression, and lack of control should be integrated into the educational curriculum. Further, it would be beneficial to study the effectiveness of such therapeutic preschool programs in order to ensure that they are accurately helping to solve a variety of behavioural difficulties. By studying the program's efficacy, researchers are provided with a clearer idea of what works and what doesn't.

Chapter Summary

The final project has brought many strengths and limitations which help to inform areas of future research in order to continue to close the gap between play therapy and early childhood education. Although this final project provides a new, unexplored modality of providing social-emotional support for all preschool and kindergarten children that is adaptive, culturally sensitive, and collaborative, research on program efficacy would help to strengthen this workshop and manual which, in turn, would increase the opportunity for funding and resources to put the final project into creation and future evaluation.

Closing Remarks

The intention of the final project discussed here is to begin to close the gap between play therapy and early childhood education, while also providing school counsellors and early childhood educators the opportunity to collaborate and decrease their workloads and stress. I hope that this project helps to allow school counsellors and early childhood educators to connect and support each other, while also providing the necessary social, emotional, and behavioural skills to preschool and kindergarten children regardless of their unique personalities, strengths, abilities, and difficulties. Although I am incredibly passionate about the social and emotional development of young children, the journey to completing this project has tested my patience, discipline, and self-compassion in more ways then one. The process required me to reach out for support on many occasions, support that I realize is similar to the support I am trying to provide for school counsellors and educators in this project. The completion of this final project fulfills one major requirement for completing my degree and gets me one step closer to

my final goal of becoming a counsellor and—eventually—a play therapist. Overall, I

hope that through the completion of this final project I can continue to hone my writing

skills and increase my knowledge about a very important area which is vital to the

success of my future career.

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relations to observed emotional support. *Infant and Child Development*, *23*, 471 –

493. doi:10.1002/icd.1843

Appendix A: Play Therapy Techniques Workshop

Slide 1

Slide 2
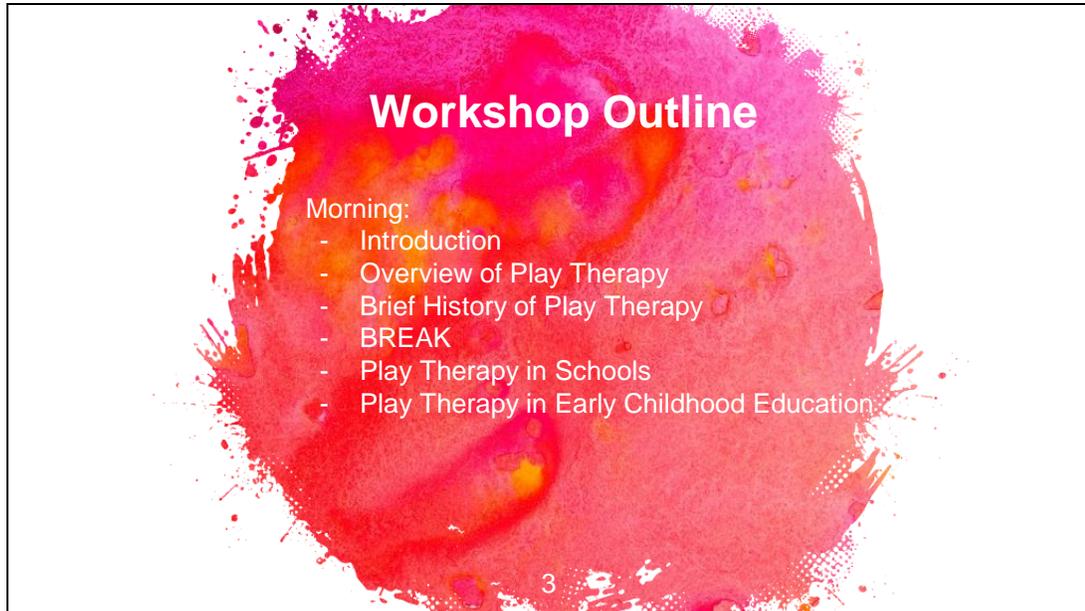
Slide 3

Slide 4
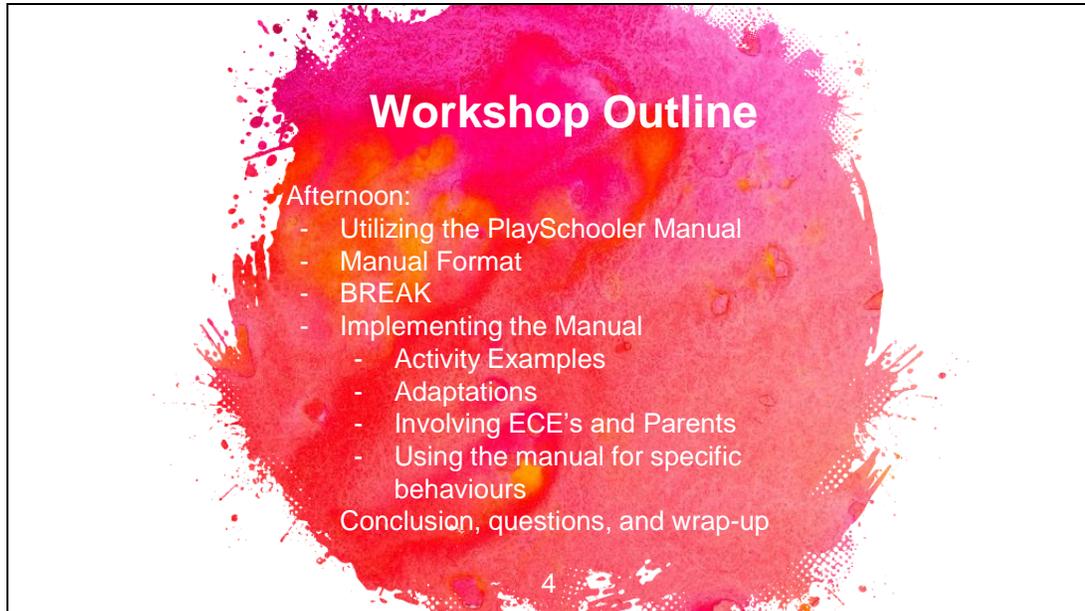
Workshop Outline

Afternoon:
- Utilizing the PlaySchooler Manual
- Manual Format
- BREAK
- Implementing the Manual
    - Activity Examples
    - Adaptations
    - Involving ECE's and Parents
    - Using the manual for specific behaviours
Conclusion, questions, and wrap-up

4

Slide 5

Slide 6

Slide 7

A six-year-old girl struggles to speak up during class free time and as a result, often plays alone and does not interact with her classmates.

A preschooler often lashes out aggressively at other children by pushing and hitting when he does not get his way.

Several kindergarten students refuse to sit still during story time and constantly disrupt the other kids, making this part of the day very chaotic. .

7
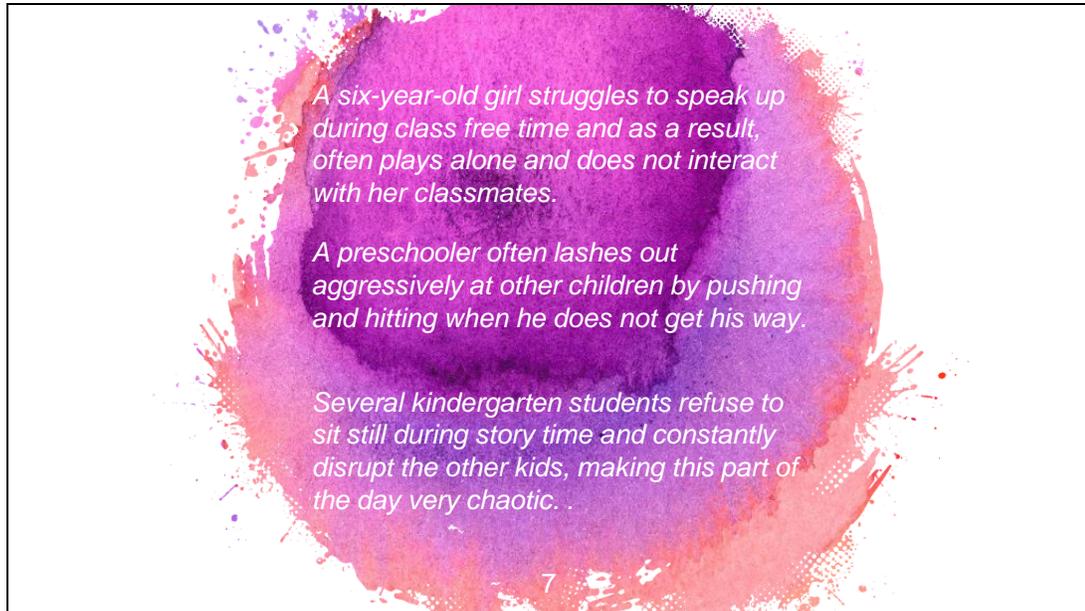
What do all three of these scenarios have in common? All these classroom struggles can be mediated by using play therapy.

Slide 8

Why use Play Therapy?

× Boosts development in 8 categories:

8

Slide 9
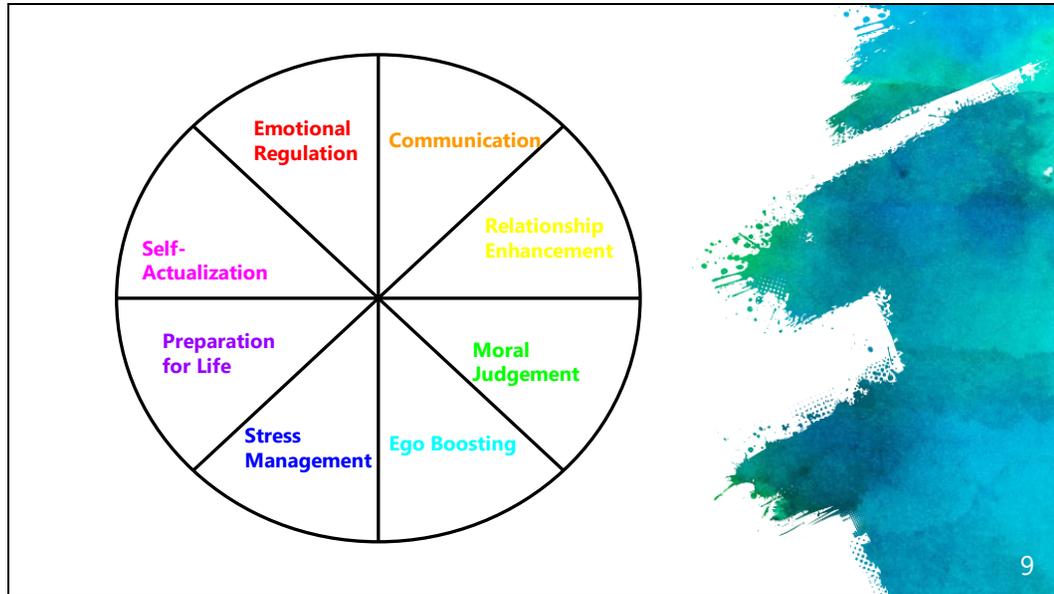
These are the eight broad categories of therapeutic play as outlined by Schaefer (2011).

- Emotional Regulation: children can regulate and control their emotions
- Communication: play serves as a catalyst for communication for children before they learn to verbalize
- Relationship Enhancement: playing together with friends, parents, and siblings enhances the overall quality of a child's relationships
- Moral Judgement: children begin to learn the difference between right and wrong
- Ego Boosting: as suggested by Freud, play serves as a catalyst for the development of a child's ego, which contains self-worth, self-esteem, and self-efficacy
- Stress Management: play can be used as a source of stress management for children as they play out stressful experiences in order to make sense of them
- Preparation for Life: play allows children to learn important coping and problem-solving skills which are necessary as they grow up
- Self-Actualization: play leads children towards a greater sense of self

Slide 10

Why use Play Therapy?

× Boosts development in 8 categories

× A child's own language
× "Verbalizing" a child's thoughts and feelings
× Builds positive social skills
× Develops cause-effect thinking
× Process stressful experiences
× Provide a sense of power and control

10

- A child's own language - play allows children to explain their thoughts and feelings; while adults can explain this verbally, children are much more likely to explain through play.
- Through the eight broad categories play helps children to:
  - Build positive social skills
  - Develop cause-effect thinking
  - Process stressful experiences
  - Provide a sense of power and control --- and much more!

Slide 11

Why use Play Therapy?

× Key Components of Play Therapy:

× Provide a safe, supportive environment
× Help children feel heard and understood
× Create a positive therapeutic alliance

11

- Provide a safe, supportive environment - children who are comfortable are more likely to play out their concerns and difficulties, fostering a healthy expression of the child's emotions
- Help children feel heard and understood - the therapist reflects the child's language and behaviour back to them to foster greater understanding and expression; helps them feel accepted
- Create a positive therapeutic alliance - by successfully accomplishing the first two points, it is likely that a strong, positive alliance can be created between child and therapist

Slide 12

Why use Play Therapy?

× These components lead to:

× Comfortably allowing a child to express their emotions, experiences, beliefs, and behaviours

× Allows a child to comfortably try new behaviours

× Fosters a child's own healing and self-growth

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Slide 13

A Brief History of Play Therapy

Slide 14
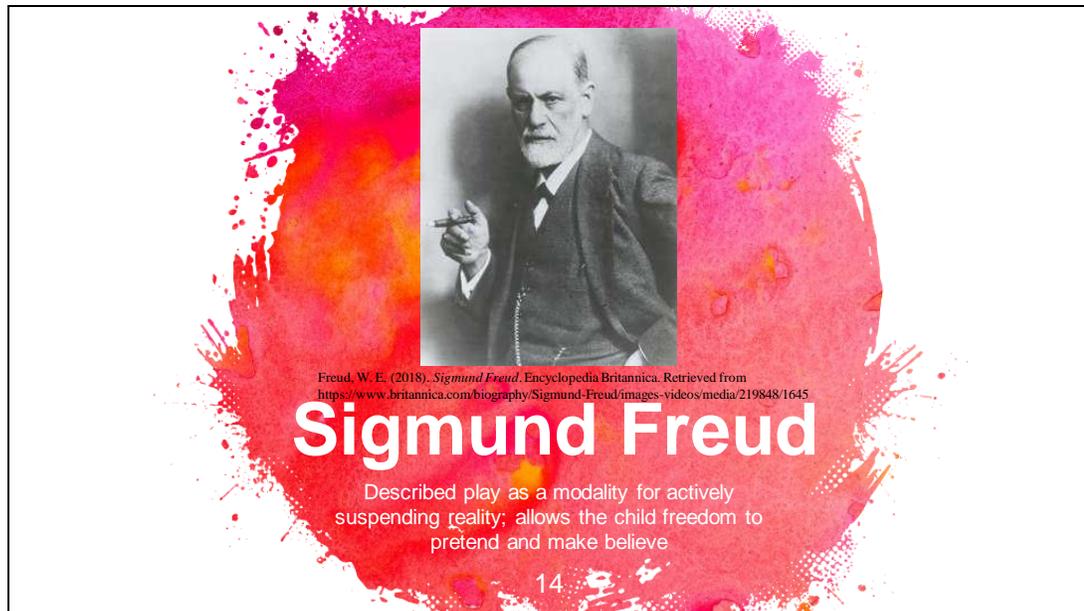
Freud, W. E. (2018). *Sigmund Freud*. Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved from
https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sigmund-Freud/images-videos/media/219848/1645

Sigmund Freud

Described play as a modality for actively
suspending reality; allows the child freedom to
pretend and make believe

14

Slide 15

Sandler, A. M. (2015). *Anna Freud*. Institute of Psychoanalysis. Retrieved from
https://www.psychoanalysis.org.uk/our-authors-and-theorists/anna-freud

Anna Freud

Extending the work of her father, play has many
ambiguous meanings and is not simply used as a
child's expression of language

15

Slide 16

Amos, A. (2015). *Melanie Klein*. Institute of Psychoanalysis. Retrieved from https://www.psychoanalysis.org.uk/our-authors-and-theorists/melanie-klein

Melanie Klein

Believed play should be regarded as a vehicle for interpretation of a child's unconscious material

16

Slide 17

Slide 18

Virginia Axline

Eight Principles of Play Therapy- The Therapist Must:

1. Develop a warm and friendly relationship with the child
2. Accept the child as they are
3. Establish a feeling of permission in the relationship
4. Recognize the feelings the child is expressing and reflect these feelings back to gain insight
5. Maintain respect for the child to solve problems and make choices
6. Not attempt to direct the child's actions or conversation
7. Not hurry the therapy along
8. Establish only necessary limitations

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Slide 19

Garry Landreth

Six Main Skills Children Learn from Play
Therapy:
1. To accept themselves
2. To respect themselves
3. To assume responsibility for
   themselves
4. To be creative and
   resourceful in confronting
   problems
5. Self-control and self-direction
6. To make choices and be
   responsible for their choices

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Slide 20

Modern Forms of Play Therapy

Client-Centred Play Therapy

- Reflects Rogers and Axline
- Emphasizes seeing through the child's viewpoint

Strength: culturally sensitive

Weakness: an individual child therapy, which can be time-consuming

Adlerian Play Therapy

- Created based off the work of Alfred Adler
- Targets misbehaviours such as attention, power, revenge, and insufficiency

Strength: able to target maladaptive behaviours

Weakness: may require teacher and parental involvement

Non-Directive Play Therapy

- Often used to encourage speech and language development

Strength: can be used across many settings

**Weakness**: more effective when used in tandem with other methods

Cognitive-Behavioural Play Therapy

- Utilizes modelling, role playing, and desensitization techniques
- Effective for treating anxiety

Strength: it's narrow focus can be time-efficient

Weakness: extended need for assessment can be time-consuming

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Slide 21

Let's take a break.

Be back in 15 minutes

21
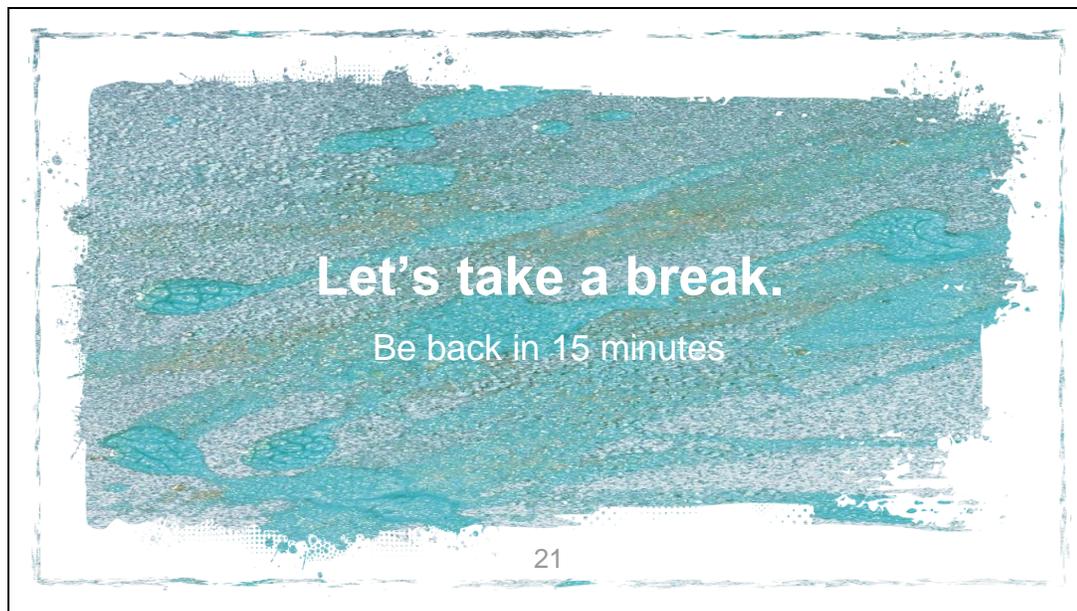
Slide 22

Slide 23

Effectiveness of Play Therapy in Schools

- Significant increases in self-efficacy after six-sessions of play therapy as compared to a control group (Fall, Balvanz, Johnson & Nelson, 1999)

- Maintained self-esteem and increased locus of control scores in at-risk elementary school children who received an average of four play therapy sessions (compared to decreases in control group) (Post, 1999)

- Improved internalizing and externalizing problem behaviours in fourth and fifth grade students after ten sessions (Flahive & Ray, 2007)

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Slide 24

School-Based Play Therapy

- School counsellors can assist children through play therapy to develop self-confidence, mastery, social skills, problem solving skills, and healthy coping skills

- Methods of play intervention may include unstructured play, drama, dance, art, music, and games

- It's culturally responsive nature allows play therapy to be used with children from various cultures, languages, and family backgrounds

- Ideal for children who may be exposed to high risk situations at home, play therapy within schools streamlines the therapeutic process

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Slide 25

Slide 26

School-Based Play Therapy

School Counsellor-Identified Barriers to Play Therapy:

- Lack of time with students
- Lack of training in play therapy
- Lack of facilities
- Lack of play therapy supplies
- Lack of administrative support
- Large amount of time-consuming activities that are not counselling related

Can you think of any more barriers that have not been named here?

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Slide 27

School-Based Play Therapy

It's your turn!

In a small group, discuss your experiences with play therapy (or, whatever type of therapy you practice) in school settings

- **What strengths and weaknesses can you identify?**
- **Do you prefer individual or group therapy?**
- **Which barriers really stand out for you personally?**
- **What can be done to make therapy better in schools?**

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Slide 28

Play Therapy in Early Childhood Education

Slide 29

Play and Early Childhood Education

- Play is critical to child development, especially between age four and six
- Children begin to develop positive social skills, coping mechanisms for adverse childhood experiences, and self-concept
- However, play therapy has not been included in early childhood classrooms, despite their benefits
- Play therapy for early childhood is needed now more than ever due to the rates of school violence, bullying, homelessness, aggression, and trauma
- The PlaySchooler Manual has been developed in order to decrease the gap between play therapy and early childhood education

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Slide 30

Play and Early Childhood Education

Social-Emotional Wellbeing

- Effective early intervention programs help to increase social-emotional resilience in young children with ACEs (adverse childhood experiences) (Tucker et al., 2017)

- Sunshine Circle preschool intervention provided evidence that children increased their positive social interactions, had fewer disciplinary issues, and more cohesive relationships (Tucker et al., 2017)

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Slide 31

Play and Early Childhood Education

Aggressive, Externalizing & Disruptive Behaviours

-   Ten one-hour sessions of group play therapy significantly reduced aggression in an experimental group of preschool children (Jarareh, Mohammadi, Nader & Moosavian, 2016)

-   An experimental group of elementary school children participated in 16 individual child-centred play therapy sessions; significantly reducing symptoms of ADHD (Schottelkorb & Tsai, 2007)

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Slide 32
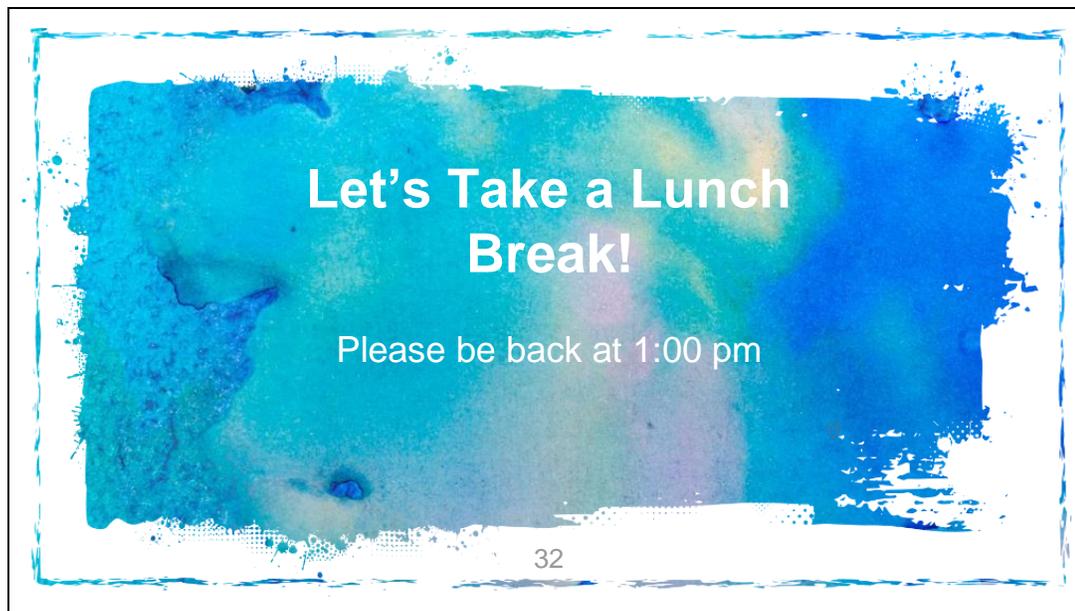
Slide 33

Utilizing the PlaySchooler Manual

Slide 34

PlaySchooler

Role:

- A social-emotional wellbeing enhancement manual
- A compilation of play therapy techniques
- Created for preschool and kindergarten aged children

Intended Use:

- Use by school counsellors, teachers, and early childhood educators
- Facilitated by school counsellors and carried out in collaboration with teachers and early childhood educators

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Slide 35

Slide 36

Slide 37

Slide 38

PlaySchooler

The 5 Categories:

- Art Based Activities
    - Require imagination, creativity, and abstract thinking
    - Tactile and manipulative

    Good for:

    - Assessment of a child's viewpoint
    - Children who are ESL
    - Children who are withdrawn, shy, or anxious
    - Children who display anger and aggression

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Art Based Activities help counsellors and teachers assess children who may display either internalizing or externalizing behaviours. By allowing children to draw, paint, or mould clay, we can get a better sense of the child's viewpoint and environment; children often depict themselves, their families, their experiences and emotions through art. This gives us a glimpse into a child's emotional state, mental health, and home life, which may help to clarify where these behaviours come from.

Slide 39

Dramatic Play Based Activities allow children to re-enact experiences from their life in order to cope with problems and come up with solutions to problems they face regularly. Children who are withdrawn, shy, or anxious can benefit from dramatic play activities that are free of criticism and judgement so they can safely engage with others and express themselves. Children who constantly need to engage in movement and be actively stimulated may excel in these types of activities.

Slide 40

PlaySchooler

The 5 Categories:

- Low Preparation Activities
    - Allows teachers to apply effective strategies despite time constraints
    - Involve little to no advanced planning
    - Can be completed in relatively short amounts of time

    Good for:

    - On-the-go activities, between lessons, transitions, breaks, etc.

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Slide 41

Mindfulness/ Body Awareness Activities were important to include in this manual to educate children on the importance of personal boundaries and touch. Children can learn respect for their own bodies as well as others' and positive social skills such as patience, cooperation, communication, and instilling positive self-esteem and self-worth are all outcomes of these activities. Children who participate in mindfulness activities are learning positive coping mechanisms for dealing with stress; setting children up for success throughout their lives as they continue to grow and learn.

Slide 42

PlaySchooler

The 5 Categories:

- Bibliotherapy Activities
    - Increase empathy for others
    - Learn about perspective taking
    - Develop problem solving skills along with main characters

    Good for:

    - Educators to incorporate into many different lessons to enhance children's understanding
    - Modeling correct behaviours, dealing with specific classroom struggles (there's bibliotherapy for everything!)
    - Includes More Resources (Page 50)

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Bibliotherapy Activities are great for accompanying specific lessons educators are required to teach their students. Further, bibliotherapy books teach problem solving and allow children to learn important life lessons through the main characters. This manual contains 5 bibliotherapy activities for specific books, and many more can be found under More Resources so educators can find a bibliotherapy book for any situation.

Slide 43

PlaySchooler

The Activity Layout:

- Activity Theme
- Time
- Goals
- Materials
- Preparation
- Description
- Discussion
- Adaptation

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Activity Theme: These states which of the four categories the activity targets
Time: This states the estimated amount of time you will need to complete the activity
Goals: This states the main goals of the activity
Materials: The materials you will need to complete the activity
Preparation: Any advanced preparation you may need to complete for this activity is stated here
Description: Describes the procedure for completing the activity
Discussion: Describes any important take-aways from the activity, any extra information needed
Adaptations: Can be found in a red box on many (but not all) of the manual activities. These are hints as to how the activity can be modified to accommodate all students

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Let's take a break.
Be back in 15 minutes

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Implementing the Manual

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Activity Examples

- With a small group, work through some of the activities you found interesting in the PlaySchooler Manual
- Be prepared to discuss this activity with the other groups in about 15 minutes

    - Are there any activities you found particularly useful?
    - If your activity contained an adaptation, can you think of any other adaptations you could make as well?

- Together, we will complete the activity on Page 41, titled 'Rain'

    - Was this activity effective in a large group?
    - How could you adapt it so students received more individualized attention?

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Adaptations

Question: Can we change the activity to suit our needs?
Answer: Absolutely!

- Adaptations to the activities are welcomed and encouraged; any way you can make the activity as inclusive as possible, while still ensuring the main message is intact is great!

- Take a look through the manual and take note of any adaptations you find particularly useful

    - Can you adapt this activity further?
    - What other adaptations could you think of?

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Adaptations

Example Adaptation Question:

"You are a school counsellor helping to implement the PlaySchooler Manual along with a Kindergarten teacher into their classroom. This particular class has many students that are loud, distractible, and active. The Kindergarten teacher worries that many of the activities in the manual will not fit with her students' style of learning."

Which activities can be adapted to fit this teacher's classroom needs?

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Adaptations

Example Adaptation Question:

"You are a Preschool teacher who has begun implementing some activities from the PlaySchooler manual into your weekly schedule. You have scheduled 15 minutes for the activity 'Mirrored Emotions' (page 20), but just found out that there will be a last minute guest speaker coming in at the same time."

How can you adapt the activity so it can still be completed in a short amount of time?

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Adaptations

Example Adaptation Question:

"As a school counsellor, you are working with an Early Childhood Educator to increase social skills and group cohesion in their preschool classroom. During the activity 'Musical Warm Fuzzies' (page 43) one student is acting silly by dancing throughout the activity, not stopping with the music to give compliments. The Early Childhood Educator seems to be ignoring this behaviour, however, it is causing several other students to follow his example."

How can you help ensure the activity runs smoothly?
What could your response to this behaviour be?
How could your response help the student be included in the activity despite his difficult behaviour?

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Involving Educators and Parents

Involving Educators:
- Takes the main workload off school counsellors
- Involves a collaborative effort from both educators and counsellors
- Increases educator empowerment and control over their classroom

It is NOT:
- Giving educators the PlaySchooler Manual and saying "have fun!"
- Explaining how the manual works, then having the educators take over implementation
- An "out" from working with difficult students individually
- Pawning off counselling duties onto educators

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Involving Educators and Parents

Involving Parents:
- Provides "wrap-around" services for students; parents can continue play therapy strategies at home
- Keeps parents in the loop, allows them to notice any progress in their child's behaviour
- Increases understanding about useful methods to strengthen their child's social-emotional wellbeing

Challenges:
- Communication with parents; does this fall on the educator or the counsellor? (Also, see Parent Handouts in Appendix A of the manual)
- Parents who do not want to be involved
- Parents who do not consent

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Using the Manual to Resolve Specific Behaviours

The Four A's: Useful Activities

1. Attention
   - Students who struggle with sitting still, staying engaged, listening, and following instructions
   - Give lots of patience, adapt activities so they can move, give them an important job to keep their focus
   - Active play therapy activities (pg. 13, 18, 20, 23, 35, 43)
2. Aggression
   - Students who have difficulty keeping their hands to themselves, respecting boundaries, and communicating their emotions verbally
   - Give lots of positive reinforcement for correct behaviours, use a "safe space" or a "cool down space" where they can go if they get angry
   - Body Awareness Activities (pg 39 - 43)

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Using the Manual to Resolve Specific Behaviours

The Four A's: Useful Activities

3.   Anxiety
   - Students who struggle to connect with others, are withdrawn or shy, and do not do well in large groups
   - Give lots of opportunities for individual learning, but also involve them in small groups where they are respected and not judged or criticized
   - Individual or Small Group Activities (pg 12, 13, 15, 16, 20, 24, 28, 30, 32, 39, 41)

4.   Attachment
   - Students who struggle with relationships with friends, teachers, and parents may be dealing with difficulties related to attachment
   - Give lots of praise, positive social interaction, and provide a "safe space" for children to go when they need a break
   - Social Skills and Body Awareness Activities (pg 27, 39, 43, 44, 46, 48)

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Moving Forward

Key Takeaways:

- <u>You</u> are the advocate!
- Implement at <u>your own pace</u>
- Reach out for <u>support </u>if needed
- Even a <u>small amount</u> of play therapy can be helpful
- Strive to include <u>all </u>students by adapting activities if necessary!

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Final Questions

Q: Do we have to work through the PlaySchool Manual from start to finish in order for it to be effective?

No! - You can pick and choose activities based on the educator's needs as well as the students needs.

Q: How can we adapt some of the activities for students with physical limitations?

There are many ways to adapt! Have them work with a partner, give extra support if needed, give them an important job, etc.

Q: How do you recommend we go about implementing this program into Kindergarten and Preschool classrooms?

Depending on your workload and your relationship with the educators at your school, you can decide how to go about implementing the program. Some counsellors may choose to wait until a need is expressed by the educator, while others may wish to extend it as an option to all educators.

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Final Questions

Q: Where can I find more resources for myself and for educators on ways to help students with specific behavioural needs?

See page 50 of the manual for extra resources!

Q: Who can I contact for support/guidance while I am implementing this program?

You are encouraged to keep in contact with the other professionals that have taken this program; support each other throughout the process! You can also contact the Presenter or Creator of PlaySchooler

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Appendix B: Manual

PlaySchooler

A Social-Emotional Wellbeing Enhancement Manual for the Implementation of Play
Therapy Techniques in Preschool and Kindergarten Classrooms

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Table of Contents

About the Manual

This Social-Emotional Wellbeing Manual is a compilation of play therapy techniques and activities which are intended to be used with a preschool and kindergarten population. This manual is intended for use by preschool and kindergarten teachers, early childhood educators, and school counsellors as a catalyst to promote social-emotional learning, growth, and wellbeing amongst preschool- and kindergarten- aged children. This manual also provides useful strategies that can be used with children who may be experiencing difficulties such as attention, aggression, anxiety, and attachment.

Manual Rationale

This manual helps to address the social and emotional needs of preschool and kindergarten children by providing educators and counsellors with play therapy techniques and activities. This manual is designed to four target key areas of learning and growth in these young students including: emotional expression, stress management, problem solving, and social skills. Through emotional expression, students can understand and express their own emotions, as well as recognize what these emotions look like in others. This creates a sense of empathy that is crucial for healthy emotional development. Stress management refers to a student's ability to cope with difficult emotions and situations in a healthy way. Activities that focus on stress management allow students the opportunity to deal with their emotions and stress through healthy means, such as exercise, deep breathing, and accessing support. This manual also includes activities that are useful for students to develop problem solving skills; this is mostly included through several bibliotherapy resources but can also be included by the facilitator as part of any of the activities in this manual. Lastly, this manual provides activities which focus on

student's need for positive social skill development. These activities allow students to establish healthy social skills with others that are important for the development of healthy relationships and friendships.

Overall, the main intention of this manual for implementing play therapy techniques is to enable school counsellors to feel supported, well-guided and well-prepared to utilize these techniques within their school. By providing this manual, it is hoped that school counsellors will feel competent addressing preschool and kindergarten difficulties and establishing play therapy techniques as a solution to unwanted behaviour and to increase healthy child development.

Benefits of Play Therapy Techniques in Preschool and Kindergarten Classrooms

Play therapy is defined as a theoretical model which aims to use the therapeutic powers of play to prevent and resolve psychosocial difficulties and assist the child to achieve optimal growth and development (Association of Play Therapy, 2016; Jensen, Biesen & Graham, 2017). A play therapist is trained in providing a safe, supportive environment for children to play out concerns and difficulties, as well as helping children feel heard and understood; this in turn, promotes healthy expression of the child's emotions and actions which is then reflected to the child by the play therapist to foster greater understanding (Drewes & Schaefer, 2010). Despite these proven benefits, very little has been done to include play therapy techniques in early childhood classrooms. Drewes and Schaefer state that play therapy within schools is needed now more than ever, due to the increasingly common rate of school violence, bulling, homelessness, aggression, and trauma that children and their families experience (2010). Therefore, researchers are adamant that play therapy is an important tool to utilize with preschool and kindergarten children because of the many benefits play therapy offers, such as to promote healthy

relationships, develop positive coping mechanisms, and increase resiliency. This manual helps address the gap between counselling and education through the inclusion of teachers and early childhood educators in the process and use of play therapy techniques in the classroom. Using play therapy techniques in the classroom may help to relieve some of the burden of work on school counsellors to provide counselling and play therapy to many students. Further, teachers and early childhood educators may feel more in control of their classroom and decrease their stress levels because of the techniques for managing student behaviour this manual provides. Also, parents will benefit from the techniques being used with their children and the information they are provided with about the techniques, so that they can continue similar intervention strategies at home, creating a more collaborative and engaged program which is maintained across settings. It is common knowledge that programs that are maintained across multiple settings have shown to have more impact on a child because they are constantly receiving the same intervention, regardless of whether they are at school or at home. This leads into the final— and arguably, most important—population which benefits from this manual. The preschool and kindergarten students who participate in the play therapy techniques will gain healthy development in many areas including social relationships, emotional intelligence, positive behavioural attributes, coping skills, and educational achievement.

Implementing Play Therapy

As discussed above, there are many ways play therapists are able to create a safe, supportive environment for children to express their emotions and difficulties. However, when using play therapy within school settings, these tools and techniques may look different. For example, when conducting play therapy in schools, small groups allow children to learn how to positively engage with others, freely express emotions in a safe setting, and practice these new

skills immediately with their group members (Jarareh, Mohammadi, Nader & Moosavian, 2016). Regardless of whether play therapy is practiced in schools or offices, there are fundamental principles of play therapy that are important to the therapeutic process. According to Virginia Axline (1974), one of the founders of child-centred play therapy, there are Eight Basic Principles that play therapists should follow to create positive change for a child. Each principle is discussed in detail below.

1. **Develop a warm, caring relationship with the child**

Studies on the effectiveness of therapy have shown evidence to suggest that the therapeutic alliance—that is, the relationship between client and therapist—can account for up to 30% of client change (Hubble, Duncan & Miller, 1999; Thomas, 2006). Therefore, many therapists believe that above all else, establishing a strong, positive alliance with a client can create change all on its own. The same can be said for the relationship between a child and a therapist (or in this case, a school counsellor, teacher, or early childhood educator). When utilizing this manual, consider those who have the strongest relationship with the students participating in the program; it is more likely that students will exhibit change when learning and growth comes directly from someone, they are comfortable and have a strong relationship with.

2. **Accept the child for who they are**

This principle may seem paradoxical to the overall goal of the manual; which is to change a child's behaviour so that they become more socially and emotionally aware of themselves and others. However, by giving children a safe space where they feel as though they are not being judged for who they are or being forced to change, children are more likely to feel comfortable enough to express behavioural changes on their own terms. When counsellors, teachers and early childhood educators put their judgements and expectations aside, children feel accepted and are

therefore, more open to the new ways of learning, growth, and behaviour. This idea leads seamlessly into principle 3: **Create a feeling of safety and permissiveness so the child feels free to express themselves**. When children feel safe enough to freely express themselves, they are allowing others the opportunity to teach them new strategies for emotional expression, problem solving, stress management, and social skills.

4. **Is sensitive to the child's feelings and reflects them, so the child develops self-understanding**

When a counsellor reflects a child's emotions, the child can develop a better understanding of their own emotions, what they feel like, and how to describe them again in the future. Many children during the preschool and kindergarten stage of development are still learning the vocabulary to express themselves. By freely providing this vocabulary to the child, they can directly relate an emotion to a word, increasing their emotional awareness and expression. For example, while an early childhood educator is completing the activity "The Magic Carpet Ride", a student struggles to help complete the puzzle aspect of the activity and proceeds to throw the puzzle pieces across the room. The educator, noticing this, tells the student that they seem "frustrated" with the puzzle, and should ask for help instead of throwing the pieces. By reflecting the child's emotion of frustration, not only is the child receiving the vocabulary for their emotion, but also being shown a more productive way to express their frustration; by asking for help.

5. **Believe in the child's ability to act responsibly, and allow them to do so**

Going hand-in-hand with principles 2 and 3, this principle allows a child to freely express themselves while also gaining the independence and confidence to try new things. When educators give students opportunities to be independent and learn on their own, specifically—

through play—they are allowing children to learn problem solving skills on their own. This principle could also align with the idea of scaffolding that educators use frequently to allow children the skills to complete tasks on their own with minor guidance. By believing wholly in a child's ability to be independent, and only providing positive guidance and feedback when necessary, educators are setting children up for success throughout their lives.

6. **Trusts the child's inner direction and does not attempt to direct the child's play**

Again, this principle might seem slightly paradoxical to the point of this manual since the activities within this manual are in some ways "directing" a child's play. Although educators can do their best to plan and follow instructions within each activity accordingly, it is important to understand that like anything, these activities may only provide a guideline for what should be accomplished within a lesson. It is important to be open to change, adaptation, and freedom of play so children do not feel forced or stifled. Overall, if some of these activities do not go as planned for your group of students, that's okay! What's more important is the overall message that the activity is trying to portray, regardless of how educators arrive at that message.

7. **Appreciate the gradual nature of the therapeutic process**

As you make your way through the activities in this manual, remember that all change can be preceded by chaos. The process of change through play therapy can be slow, but this gradual nature of change is normal and common. Try to refrain from forcing lessons on the students and allow them to learn, grow, and adapt at their own pace.

8. **Establish only necessary limits**

While many of these principles preach the importance of a child's freedom of play, curiosity, and learning, this does not mean that all rules go out the window. Classroom rules that are necessary to keep everyone safe are equivalent to the therapeutic limits being described here. Simply, use

your judgement when it comes to setting limits during these therapeutic activities. Challenge your beliefs on what rules are important to follow and which can be modified. Is it imperative that all the students sit still and listen to an educator's instructions before beginning an activity? Maybe not. Maybe they can stand, or the educator can explain the activity as they go. Should students keep both feet on the ground and not climb on top of tables? Probably, since this might cause injury. The point is, while each activity does have a main purpose and lesson, too many limits and rules can create an environment which squashes creativity and learning.

Overall, by understanding and referring to these Eight Basic Principles, educators can ensure that regardless of their level of knowledge about play therapy, they are providing students with an atmosphere where they are free to learn, grow, and change. When completing any of the activities in this manual, by ensuring these principles are implemented, educators can successfully complete *any* play therapy lesson.

Implementation Considerations

When designing this manual, five considerations for the implementation of this manual in a preschool and kindergarten setting were considered:

1. **A Proactive Approach**

It is intended that this manual will provide school counsellors, early childhood educators, and teachers with a resource which utilizes a proactive approach; providing *all* students with highly enriching social and emotional development *before* some students may require specialized attention or services. In this way, not only are *all* children reaping the benefits of positive social and emotional development, but this approach also targets students who may already lack skills in certain social and emotional areas *before* they fall too far behind.

2. **Group Structure**

This manual is designed to be used by early childhood educators and teachers who typically work in a full classroom with anywhere from 10 to 25 students. Therefore, it requires that this manual's activities be able to support various group sizes and structures. Many of these activities work best as small group activities for 8 – 10 students but can also be adapted for full classes of 25 students as well. Facilitator's are advised to use their judgement and not be afraid to get creative in the implementation of these activities with their students. Even if the activity cannot be used in the exact way it is described, some intervention is always better than none. Or, split the students up into teams and rotate which team gets to complete an activity. Tailor the manual to fit the best way it possibly can and don't be afraid to alter the strategies and activities.

3. **A Supportive Relationship**

Many researchers describe a supportive relationship as a key component to eliciting change in an individual. Carl Rogers (1957) stated that a relationship between counsellor and client requires genuine care, understanding, and acceptance from the counsellor in order to promote positive change. This idea also applies to early childhood education; when early childhood educators and teachers listen, understand and support a child, they are allowing children to increase their self-understanding, self-appreciation, and self-confidence. While completing any of the activities in this manual, keep in mind that your unconditional support, care, and acceptance of a student for who they are is a very large part of how to engage them in the activities and the emotional process.

4. **Adaptations**

Inclusion of *all* students is one of the main goals of this manual. Therefore, if your classroom has children of all backgrounds, skill levels, and behavioural and cognitive difficulties, this manual

will encourage you to find a way to adapt many of the activities to be useful and engaging for all your students, despite their differences or difficulties. You will find a red box on some activities; this indicates an adaptation that can be made for that specific activity. Although this manual tries to be inclusive of as many individual difficulties and differences as possible, unfortunately you may find that some of the activities may not be suitable for some students. In these cases, always do your best to accommodate all students, even if that means they don't get as much out of the activity as you would like.

5. **Parental Awareness and Involvement**

As previously stated, it only makes sense that learning and development are much more easily attained when children are being taught consistently across all settings, such as both at school and home. Therefore, this manual takes into consideration the parental awareness and involvement that may be helpful throughout the use of the activities. On the other hand, in some cases it can be difficult to get parents on board with new ideas and activities that are being implemented at school. This manual is equipped with parent handouts that can be used to keep parents educated and aware of how these activities are helping to improve the social and emotional development of their child. Although parental involvement will vary based on the school, classroom, and even student, this manual allows early childhood educators and teachers to be prepared to involve parents in the learning process if necessary. Further, consider allowing students to take home their completed activities so their parents and guardians can see them, discuss them, and ask questions about what they learned; this helps to increase the likelihood that the students are retaining the new information they are receiving.

Manual Format

This manual is divided into five different categories: art-based activities, dramatic play-based activities, low preparation activities, mindfulness and body awareness activities, and bibliotherapy activities. Each category begins with an introduction which includes the importance of the category or gives details about the supporting research behind the category. The activities in these categories are also broken down into four main themes that the manual is attempting to target, including: emotional expression, stress management, problem solving, and social skills. Each activity includes these themes as well as an average time frame. Then, the activity is broken down into its main goals, materials, preparation, description and discussion. While the main goals and materials sections are self-explanatory, the preparation section details any advance preparation the facilitator needs to complete prior to the activity. The description section outlines how the activity can be run by the facilitator, and the discussion section details the main benefits and outcomes of the activity. Some activities include handouts or pictures that can be photocopied to accompany the activity. Finally, Appendix A of the manual includes parent information sheets, activity references, and other relevant resources. An "Activities at a Glance" section is included on the following page for quick reference.

Activities at a Glance

Theme	Activity Title	Page Number
Emotional Expression	Guess the Feeling	16
Emotional Expression	Kinetic Family Drawing	19
Emotional Expression	Feelings Hide-and-Seek	22
Emotional Expression	Red Light, Green Light Emotions	27
Emotional Expression	The Hot Potato	34
Emotional Expression	Mirrored Emotions	24
Stress Management	Welcome to My World	17
Stress Management	Puppets and Healthy Coping Skills	26
Stress Management	Blowing Bubbles	32
Stress Management	Squeeze it Out	33
Stress Management	Anti-Stress Kit	36
Stress Management	Rain	45
Problem Solving	Cartoon Helpers	20
Problem Solving	Hide-and-Seek Solutions	39
Problem Solving	Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus (book)	52
Problem Solving	Don't Let the Pigeon Stay Up Late (book)	53
Problem Solving	I Did It, I'm Sorry (book)	53
Problem Solving	It Wasn't My Fault (book)	53
Social Skills	The Magic Carpet Ride	28
Social Skills	Hugs	43
Social Skills	Compliments	50
Social Skills	Musical Warm Fuzzies	47
Social Skills	The Kindness Tree	48
Social Skills	Gigi and Lulu's Gigantic Fight (book)	52

Art Based Activities

Art based activities require young students to employ imagination, creativity, and abstract thinking skills. Art activities can also be tactile; many children enjoy the feel of paint and clay and enjoy manipulating these materials into different images and shapes.

Art based activities are useful for teachers, early childhood educators, and school counsellors to assess a child's viewpoint and environment; the way children depict themselves, their families, their experiences and their emotions says a lot about their emotional state, mental health, and home life. These activities may be especially useful for children who's first language is not English or that are from culturally diverse backgrounds, as well as children that are shy, withdrawn or anxious. Alternatively, children who display anger and aggression can also complete these activities for educators to get a better of where these behaviours may come from, and positive ways to cope with these feelings.

The activities in this section employ the use of colouring supplies, but can also use paint, clay, and other household materials to help children express emotions, manage stress, and develop problem solving skills.

Mindful Reminders

Activity Theme: Introducing Play Therapy	**Time:** 30 – 45 minutes

Goals:

- To promote a sense of ownership and accomplishment
- To remain mindful about the morals and lessons learned throughout the play therapy activities

Materials:

- Small containers (one for each student) such as shoe boxes or coffee tins
- Decorating supplies such as glue, glitter, stickers, markers, magazines, scissors, etc.
- Paper and pencils

Preparation:

The leader ensures supplies and containers are prepared for the activity. If the leader wishes to include glitter, glue, etc., some preparation of covering surfaces to contain mess may be advised.

Description:

The leader starts the activity by telling the children that they are going to be making containers as a safe place to keep all the things they learn in the play therapy activities. The leader allows the students to use the craft supplies to decorate their containers.

Discussion:

This activity is best used as a starting point for all the play therapy activities subsequently included in this manual. The students can take ownership in the completion of their container, then throughout the play therapy activities, can include words, phrases, and drawings so they can be mindful about what they have learned. This also allows students the opportunity to take the container home and share what they have learned with their families; giving the parents an opportunity to further reinforce their learning.

Adaptation

If small containers are hard to come by in large quantities for your students, you can also consider using a small Ziploc bag that the students can use in a similar fashion. If you use messenger bags for the students to communicate with parents, these smaller bags could fit in the messenger bags for easy transport home.

Adapted from: Curry, J. R., & Fazio-Griffith, L., J. (2013). *Integrating play techniques in comprehensive school counseling programs.* Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Guess the Feeling

Activity Theme: Emotional Expression	**Time:** 20 – 30 minutes

Goals:

- To promote expression of feelings
- To develop empathy for others

Materials:

- Paper
- Colouring Supplies

Preparation:

Pick a story in which the main character experiences strong feelings as a result of a difficult situation. For storybook ideas, refer to the bibliotherapy resources on page 54.

Description:

The leader reads the selected story to the students and asks them what feelings they might experience if they were the main character in the story. After the story, the leader asks the students to draw a picture about a time when they experienced similar emotions to the character in the story; it is important to note that while the students may portray the feeling in their picture, they are not to write the feeling down. When the students finish their drawings, they take turns guessing how others felt in their chosen situation based on their drawing. Once all the students have guessed the feelings in turn, the leader can facilitate a discussion about the idea that people can feel different in various situations.

Discussion:

This simple activity allows students to begin to learn about empathy and understanding the emotions of others. It also allows students to be able to normalize the process of drawing and expressing their feelings with others. Some children may be self-conscious about their drawing ability, in which case the leader can provide support and encouragement and give suggestions on how to draw symbols to represent their feelings instead of a full picture.

Adaptation

This activity can be modified in several different ways. Instead of drawing, the students can use playdoh or modelling clay to recreate their experience. Or, for a more simplified version, students can use Mr. Potato heads or outlines of a face to recreate their expression on how they were feeling during their experience. Then other students can still guess what the student was feeling through these methods.

Adapted from: Curry, J. R., & Fazio-Griffith, L., J. (2013). *Integrating play techniques in comprehensive school counseling programs.* Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Welcome to my World

Activity Theme: Stress Management	**Time:** 20 – 30 minutes

Goals:

- To promote understanding of the meaning of "stress"
- To discover and discuss positive strategies and coping mechanisms for dealing with stress

Materials:

- Welcome to my World worksheet (included)
- Colouring Supplies

Preparation:

The leader can photocopy the Welcome to my World worksheet, ensuring there is one for each student.

Description:

The leader starts the activity by asking the students: "what is stress?". This can open a discussion among the leader and the students as they give ideas as to what stress means to them. The leader then asks the students: "what happens when you feel stress?" and stimulates a discussion like the first. The leader then passes out the worksheet and explains to the students that they will be completing an activity about how to make them feel better when they feel stress. The worksheet contains a circle that is divided into four quadrants. The leader asks the students what causes them stress at school, home, with friends, and alone—each quadrant represents a different setting. The students can draw what causes them stress in each quadrant, then the leader can stimulate a conversation about what they can do to make themselves feel better in each situation—then draw that as well.

Discussion:

This activity provides a starting point for discussing stress and stress management techniques in young children. It is important to note that the stress management techniques that the students come up with do not have to be complicated—simple, useful stress management techniques such as "going outside to play hockey" or "playing with my sibling" are still positive ways to cope with stress. It allows students to begin thinking about how to change their stress, worry, and anxiety into positive coping strategies such as exercise, interaction with others, and focusing on interests.

Adaptation

To make this game more active, you can eliminate the drawing aspect and instead, assign each corner of the classroom (or a gym if you have that) as a setting: school, home, with friends, and alone. Instruct the students to move around from corner to corner and ask them some things they could do to manage stress, or, give them examples if they can't come up with any on their own.

Adapted from: Lowenstein, L. (1965). *Creative interventions for troubled children & youth.* Toronto, ON: Champion Press.

Welcome to My World

Name: _____

At School

At Home

With Friends

Alone
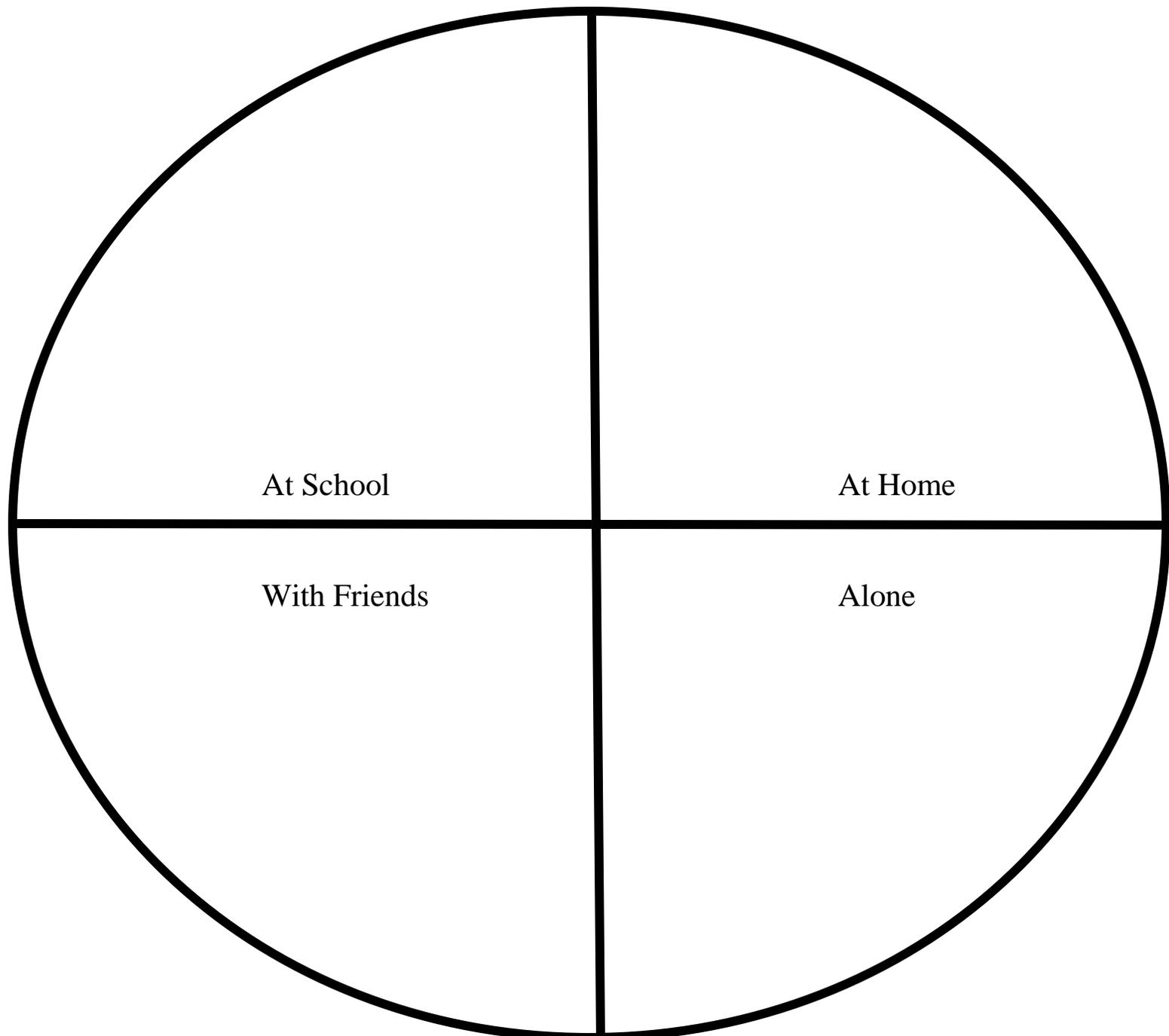
Kinetic Family Drawing

Activity Theme: Emotional Expression	**Time:** 10 – 20 minutes

Goals:

- To increase awareness and empathy about the feelings of others
- To increase understanding about the child's family dynamics

Materials:

- Paper
- Colouring Supplies

Preparation:

No advanced preparation is required for this activity.

Description:

The facilitator starts the activity by explaining to the students that they would like to learn more about their families. Then, the facilitator asks the students to draw a picture of their family with each family member doing something. After the drawings are complete, the facilitator can ask for volunteers to share their drawings with the class. The facilitator then asks questions about the child's drawing, such as what each person is doing, how they feel, and the characteristics of each family member. Although it may be difficult or time-consuming, the facilitator is encouraged to talk to each child about their drawing in order to stimulate conversations about their family and the emotions and characteristics within each person.

Discussion:

This activity gives the facilitator a better understanding of the child's family, as well as the child's perception of their family atmosphere. This activity is best completed with a school counsellor present to ensure any worrisome drawings or statements by the children are thoroughly explored.

Adapted from: Curry, J. R., & Fazio-Griffith, L., J. (2013). *Integrating play techniques in comprehensive school counseling programs.* Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Cartoon Helpers

Activity Theme: Problem-Solving	**Time:** 10 – 20 minutes

Goals:

- To initiate problem-solving skills
- To develop coping skills
- To discover positive self-attributes

Materials:

- Paper
- Colouring Supplies

Preparation:

This activity does not require any advanced preparation. However, facilitators can use a problem-solving storybook as an introduction to this activity. See page 54 for bibliotherapy ideas.

Description:

To begin this activity, the facilitator may read a story in which the main character has a problem that they must solve. Otherwise, the facilitator can begin the activity by stating that they would like the students to draw a picture of a time when they had a tricky situation or feeling. The facilitator monitors the students' drawings and can discuss the students' chosen problem to help elicit problem-solving strategies. Next, the facilitator asks the students to think of ways they can solve the tricky situation or feeling, then draw these as well. Once completed, the facilitator is encouraged to discuss each child's picture with them in order to elicit a child's problem solving and coping skills, as well as any positive attributes that are present.

Discussion:

This activity allows students to process through difficult situations by engaging in alternative thoughts, feelings, and behaviours in order to solve their problem. This activity also offers an opportunity for students to gain knowledge about their strengths and resources they can use in difficult situations to help them.

Adaptation

If students struggle with colouring, playdoh or modelling clay can be used instead to create their tricky situation and solution. This adaptation is more tactile and is useful for students who may need a higher amount of sensory stimulation to complete the activity effectively.

Dramatic Play-Based Activities

Dramatic play naturally allows young children to re-enact situations and activities from their daily life and come up with solutions to problems they face regularly; as a result, dramatic play enhances the development of children's cognitive and social skills. Dramatic play also allows for the mimicking of positive behaviour, such as manners, working together, and sharing.

Many children enjoy dramatic play, but children who may be shy, withdrawn or anxious may have a difficult time engaging in these activities. It is important to provide these children an environment free of harsh criticism and judgement and that is a safe place for them to express their feelings without fear of punishment. Further, dramatic play activities may be especially helpful for students who have a difficult time sitting still and need to be actively stimulated, such as children who show ADHD behaviours.

The following activities initiate dramatic play to teach children positive social skills, emotional awareness and expression, as well as stress management.

Feelings Hide-and-Seek

Activity Theme: Emotional Expression	**Time:** 10 – 20 minutes

Goals:

- To increase emotional awareness and expression
- To increase empathy for others

Materials:

- Index cards or construction paper
- Feelings Faces (included)

Preparation:

Photocopy and cut out the feelings faces (included) and glue them to index cards or construction paper. The facilitator can decide how many cards to include depending on the size of the group; for example, if a small group of 5-10 students is participating, the facilitator may choose to hide 12 feeling faces (to allow each student a chance to find a feeling card). Hide these cards throughout the classroom or playground at varying degrees of difficulty.

Description:

The facilitator explains to the students that they are going to play a different kind of hide-and-seek game. The facilitator states that feelings are hidden, and that the students' job is to find all the cards. When a student finds a card, they identify the feeling then tell a time when they felt that way. The game continues until all cards are found.

Discussion:

This activity promotes healthy expression of emotions and allows children to increase their awareness about the different types of emotions and how others can also experience them.

Adaptation

To simplify this activity, if your students are only starting to learn to identify emotions, instead of having students tell a time when they felt that emotion, you can ask them to mimic the emotion on each card; get them to act sad, happy, mad, surprised, scared and sick.

Feelings Faces
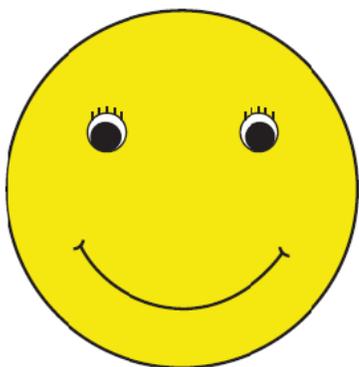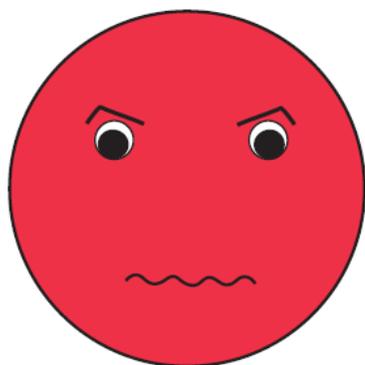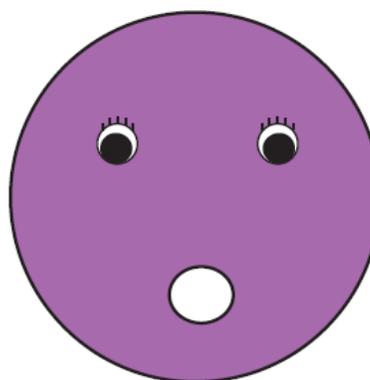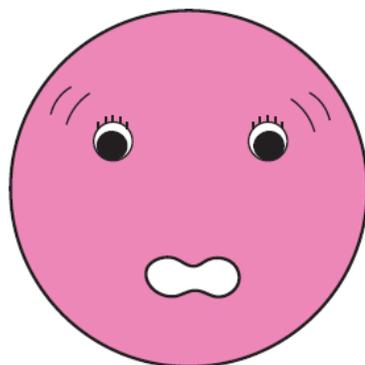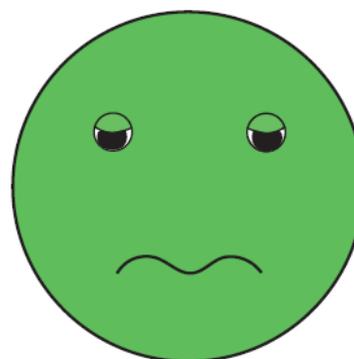
Happy	Sad
Mad	Surprised
Scared	Sick

Mirrored Emotions

Activity Theme: Emotional Expression	**Time:** 10 – 20 minutes

Goals:

-   To increase emotional awareness and understanding
-   To practice turn-taking
-   To recognize the differences between emotions

Materials:

-   Small mirrors (one for each pair of partners)

Preparation:

No advanced preparation is needed for this activity.

Description:

The facilitator begins the activity by telling the students that they will be making faces to go with each emotion. The facilitator then pairs up each student with a partner (or allows them to pick their own partners) and gives each pair a mirror. Encourage the children to use their manners by saying "Can I please have a turn?" and "Thank you", throughout the activity. The facilitator then discusses each emotion face in turn; happy, sad, mad, scared, and surprised, and focuses on the features of each emotion on our face. Examples of each emotion and their features is given below:

> Happy: bright eyes, crinkles in the corners, mouth smiling, tight cheeks
>
> Sad: mouth turned down, middle of eyebrows up, eyes open, large lower lip
>
> Mad: eyes straight ahead and narrowed, brows drawn, mouth tight, nostrils flared
>
> Scared: wide eyes, brows drawn and up, mouth partly open
>
> Surprised: wide eyes, brows up, mouth wide open

Ensure each partner gets a turn with the mirror to practice mimicking each emotion. The facilitator can encourage the partners to make the faces at each other to find similarities and differences. To end the activity, the facilitator collects the mirrors and can ask the students what they learned from the activity.

Discussion:

This activity allows students the opportunity to practice expressing key emotions with a partner. This facilitates understanding and provides students with increased awareness about their emotions and the emotions of others.

Adaptation

If tracking down or buying several small mirrors isn't feasible, you can always bring a large mirror from home or borrow one from another class. Then, have the students line up in front of the mirror and take turns practicing their emotion faces.

Puppets and Healthy Coping Skills

Activity Theme: Stress Management	**Time:** 20 – 30 minutes

Goals:

- To provide students with ways to help manage stress and conflict
- To learn coping skills for managing life events

Materials:

- Puppets or materials to make puppets (such as socks, googly eyes, hot glue, etc.)
- A stress management/coping skills storybook (see page 54 for bibliotherapy ideas)

Preparation:

If the facilitator plans on making puppets for each student (or having the students make their own puppets), do this beforehand. The facilitator should also have a puppet for themselves.

Description:

The facilitator begins the activity by reading a storybook in which the main character feels emotions as a result of stress, conflict, or a difficult situation. The facilitator may choose to read the story as their own puppet or bring their puppet (and the student's puppets) out after the story to prevent fidgeting and distraction. After the story, the facilitator's puppet asks the students' puppets to think of a time when they felt the same way the main character in the story did. The student's puppets can respond with a similar experience if they feel comfortable doing so. Then the facilitator's puppet asks the students' puppets what they can do to feel better in a stressful situation like the main character. The facilitator can give examples such as talking to a friend, taking deep breaths, or doing a fun activity.

Discussion:

This activity is useful for students to be able to externalize their feelings when stressed by expressing them through their puppet. This activity also provides students with coping mechanisms for dealing with stress and conflict.

Adaptation

If you don't have puppets or socks to make puppets, stuffed animals will work just as easily.

Adapted from: Curry, J. R., & Fazio-Griffith, L., J. (2013). *Integrating play techniques in comprehensive school counseling programs.* Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Red Light, Green Light Emotions

Activity Theme: Emotional Expression	**Time:** 15 – 20 minutes

Goals:

- To allow students to express many different emotions

Materials:

No materials are needed for this activity.

Preparation:

No advanced preparation is required for this activity.

Description:

This activity can be played in a variety of spaces, but ideally, somewhere large enough for the students to stand in a line, arms length apart. The facilitator has the students line up, then explains that they will be playing red light green light. When the facilitator says, "green light", the students begin walking forward. But, when the facilitator says, "red light", they will also say an emotion. The students should stop and perform the emotion with their face and body. The game resumes as normal when the facilitator says, "green light" again, and the game can be played for several rounds to allow students to express many different emotions. Emotions could include:

- Happy
- Sad
- Angry
- Scared
- Surprised
- Sick
- Excited
- Grumpy

Discussion:

This activity allows students to express emotions in a healthy, active atmosphere. By using this drama-based activity, students can feel comfortable expressing their emotions in the future.

Adaptation

If you don't have access to a big enough space for this activity, you can modify it and make it work in your classroom on a carpet or open area. Have the kids dance around to music, and when the music stops, call out an emotion for the students to imitate.

The Magic Carpet Ride

Activity Theme: Social Skills	**Time:** 30 – 45 minutes

Goals:

- To strengthen students' social skills
- To enhance group cohesion

Materials:

- A small carpet or towel (large enough for all students to sit on)
- Magic Carpet Ride stamp booklet (included)
- Ink and stamp
- Paper and colouring supplies
- 1 puzzle
- 1 plastic tea set
- 1 jar of bubbles

Preparation:

Make a booklet for each student by photocopying the Magic Carpet Ride stamp book, cutting out the four squares, and then stapling the four pages together.

Description:

The leader tells the students that they are going on a magic carpet ride and that they will be making four stops along their journey. Give each student a booklet and tell them that at each stop they have a task to complete. Once the task is completed successfully, each student gets a stamp in their booklet. To begin, all the students sit on the magic carpet to set off on their journey. The teacher is encouraged to make this experience theatrical and enthusiastic, so the children can imagine they are really on a magic carpet ride. Instructions for each stop are provided below.

1. **The Land of Sharing** – at the first stop, the students are asked to draw a picture with the paper and colouring supplies. The focus of this stop is to encourage the students to share the colouring supplies and make sure each student gets to use each colour they need for their picture. Once completed, the teacher stamps the first page of each student's booklet then the group gets back on the carpet and heads toward their next stop.
2. **The Land of Waiting Your Turn** – at this stop, the teacher allows each student the chance to use the bubbles. Once all the students have demonstrated the ability to wait their turn for the bubbles, the teacher stamps the second page of each student's booklet. Then, the students get back on their carpet for their next stop.
3. **The Land of Working Together** – for this stop, the students must work together to complete a puzzle. If the students are not cooperating and working well together, the teacher can take the puzzle apart and have them try again. Further, the teacher can offer

Adapted from: Lowenstein, L. (1965). *Creative interventions for troubled children & youth.* Toronto, ON: Champion Press.

suggestions throughout the puzzle building process to facilitate cooperation. Once completed, the teacher stamps the third page of each student's book, then they all return to the carpet to head to their final stop.

4. **The Land of Being Polite** – finally, in this land, the students use the plastic tea set to have a tea party. This involves the teacher asking the students to use their manners, such as "Hello, how are you?", "Can I have a cookie please?" and "Thank you for the tea.". Once the tea party is over, the teacher stamps the last page of the booklets and the group returns to the carpet to make their journey back home.

Once the students are "home", the teacher facilitates discussion about what the students learned at each stop on the magic carpet ride.

Discussion:

This activity encourages the development of healthy social skills among students. For students who may struggle with forming or maintaining friendships, this activity may help to strengthen their interpersonal skills through imaginative play. The use of stamps after each positive social interaction helps to reinforce their positive behaviour.

Adaptation

This activity can be simplified by using easier activities at each destination. For example, if a puzzle is too challenging for the students, you can ask them to make a block tower or tidy up an area of toys for their "Working Together" stamp.

Adapted from: Lowenstein, L. (1965). *Creative interventions for troubled children & youth.* Toronto, ON: Champion Press.

The Magic Carpet Ride Stamp Booklet

1. Sharing	2. Waiting your turn
3. Helping each other	4. Being Polite

Adapted from: Lowenstein, L. (1965). *Creative interventions for troubled children & youth.* Toronto, ON: Champion Press.

Low Preparation Activities

Low preparation activities are important to include in this manual not due to their ability to promote learning and growth, but to give teachers, early childhood educators, and school counsellors an opportunity to apply some basic social and emotional development activities when time is a factor. As educators, we have a long list of things that need to be completed each day, not to mention the list of things that we are required to teach our students in 10 short months. These low preparation activities involve little to no advance planning; they are on-the-go activities that can be completed quickly and efficiently, while still providing students with important lessons and opportunities for learning.

The activities in the section focus on a variety of social and emotional skills that are easy to adapt and include throughout a whirlwind of daily or weekly activities.

Blowing Bubbles

Activity Theme: Stress Management	**Time:** 10 – 20 minutes

Goals:

- To learn deep breathing skills
- To promote the management of strong emotions

Materials:

- Bubbles
- Bubble wands

Preparation:

No advanced preparation is needed for this activity.

Description:

The facilitator begins the activity by telling the students that they are going to try and blow big bubbles. To do this, they must focus on taking big breaths in and letting it out very slowly; the facilitator can model this by blowing a bubble themselves. Allow each student the opportunity to practice breathing in and out before they try it with the bubble wand. Then, taking turns, have the students practice their deep breathing by trying to blow the biggest bubble. Once everyone has had a turn, the facilitator can ask the students at what other times they can use big breaths; such as at home when they are mad at their brother or sister, or at school when they are upset or injured.

Discussion:

This deep breathing technique can effectively teach children how to handle intense emotions; it increases emotion regulation and can help children to change their behaviours as a result of their emotions.

Adaptation

Many children can get very excited about being able to use bubbles. To keep this activity focused mainly on teaching the students deep breathing, you can consider using a mindfulness video from the internet, or a script which explains how to breathe deeply, then introduce the use of bubbles as practice. This way, the students will already have an idea on how to take deep breaths, then the bubbles are used as supplemental practice.

Adapted from: Curry, J. R., & Fazio-Griffith, L., J. (2013). *Integrating play techniques in comprehensive school counseling programs.* Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Squeeze it Out

Activity Theme: Stress Management	**Time:** 20 – 40 minutes

Goals:

- Foster healthy ways to cope with stress

Materials:

- Balloons
- Cornstarch
- Water
- Funnel
- Large bowl
- Mixing spoon

Preparation:

To avoid the mess of mixing cornstarch and water with the students, this mixture can be prepared beforehand if desired. The mixture should have the consistency of glue; this will ensure that it will drip through the funnel.

Description:

Introduce the activity to the students by stating that they will be making their own stress balls that they can squeeze if they are angry or frustrated. Allow each student to pick a balloon, then use the funnel to fill each balloon until just under full. Tie the balloons and allow the student to practice squeezing the balloon. Ask them how it feels in their hand and if they feel better after squeezing it. Make sure that the children know if they squeeze it too hard, it may break.

Discussion:

This activity gives students a tangible object to use if they are feeling mad or frustrated. This helps provide students with a positive coping mechanism and allows them to begin to develop other positive coping mechanisms and behaviours to deal with their emotions.

The Hot Potato

Activity Theme: Emotional Expression	**Time:** 20 – 40 minutes

Goals:

- To facilitate the identification and discussion of feelings
- To encourage greater awareness of feelings

Materials:

- A toy to be used as the "Hot Potato" (i.e., a stress ball, stuffed animal, or other ball shaped toy of choice)
- Questions (included)
- Index cards or construction paper

Preparation:

Cut and paste each question provided onto separate index cards or squares of construction paper.

Description:

The leader has the students sit in a circle with the question cards in the middle. The leader then asks if the students have ever played Hot Potato and proceeds to explain the game to them as follows:

The leader either prompts the students to start singing "Hot Potato" or uses music to cue the students to start passing the potato around the circle. When the music stops, or the song is over, whichever student is caught holding the potato picks a card for the leader to read aloud, then answers the question. If they wish, the student can pass or ask the other students for help. Then, the game continues in this way until all the questions have been answered.

Discussion:

Due to the nature of the game, it will create enthusiasm among the children as the potato is passed around the circle and will invite students to talk about their feelings. Throughout the game, the teacher is encouraged to provide supportive feedback and praise to the students who verbalize and express their feelings. Further, if a child discusses is difficult or painful event, the teacher is encouraged to validate the child's feelings and can facilitate a brief discussion among the group if necessary.

Adaptation

This activity is ideal for small groups of students but could be adapted to use with a whole class if two or three small groups are made. This may require a bit more planning and could take a bit longer to complete then the given time frame. If you choose to split the class into two or three small groups, ensure you make enough sets of cards for each group and put each group's cards in the same order. This way, you can discuss the same card for all groups at the same time.

Adapted from: Lowenstein, L. (1965). *Creative interventions for troubled children & youth.* Toronto, ON: Champion Press.

Hot Potato Activity Questions

Show with your face and body what someone looks like when they are happy.	Show with your face and body what someone looks like when they are sad.
Show with your face and body what someone looks like when they are mad.	Show with your face and body what someone looks like when they are scared.
What makes you feel happy?	What makes you feel sad?
What makes you feel mad?	What makes you feel scared?
How would you feel if your brother or sister broke your favourite toy?	How would you feel if another girl or boy did not want to play with you?
How would you feel if you woke up from a bad dream?	How would you feel if someone said something nice to you?

Adapted from: Lowenstein, L. (1965). *Creative interventions for troubled children & youth.* Toronto, ON: Champion Press.

Anti-Stress Kit

Activity Theme: Stress Management	**Time:** 30 – 40 minutes

Goals:

- To help identify signs of stress
- To promote healthy coping strategies

Materials:

- A gift bag (or paper bag) for each student
- Anti-Stress Kit Messages (included)
- Scissors
- Colouring and decorating supplies

Preparation:

Photocopy the included message sheet (one sheet for each student). If having the students cut out their own messages could be a challenge, these messages can also be pre-cut by the facilitator.

Description:

Begin the activity with a discussion about stress and what it means to each student. The facilitator can use this definition if necessary: "Stress is what happens to our bodies when we are feeling lots of things at once, like tired, worried, or rushed." Both the facilitator and the students can share examples of times when they have felt stress. Or (if time allows), students can draw a picture of themselves when they feel stress, paying close attention to what their body feels or the emotions on their face.

Next, the facilitator can help students think of good ways to manage stress. This can be done on a whiteboard or chalkboard in the classroom, chart paper, or aloud. Some examples the facilitator can are talking to friends, being active, eating healthy, getting lots of sleep, and performing relaxing activities. This discussion should then shift into the use of an anti-stress kit that each student can make for themselves to use at school or home when they feel stressed.

The facilitator hands out the gift bags so students can colour or decorate them. Then, the facilitator gives out the message sheets, so students can add whichever messages they want to their bag. The facilitator can also encourage students to think of their own stress management activities and write (or draw) them to add as well.

Discussion:

This activity helps students understand stress and ways to reduce their stress. By allowing each student to create their own anti-stress kit, they can personalize it and include activities and coping techniques that are specific to them. These kits can then be utilized by the students either at home or at school and can help them to identify when they are feeling stressed and need to participate in a stress-relieving activity.

Adapted from: Lowenstein, L. (1965). More c*reative interventions for troubled children & youth*. Toronto, ON: Champion Press.

Anti-Stress Kit Message Sheet

Eat Healthy Foods	**Exercise**
Write or draw	**Talk to friends or family, or teachers**
Laugh	**Punch a pillow**
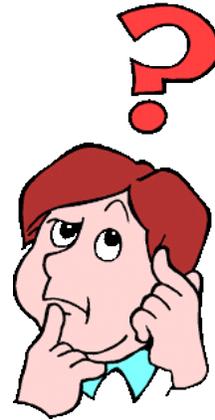
Ask for a hug	**Think of a happy memory**
Relax	**Think happy thoughts**

Adapted from: Lowenstein, L. (1965). *Creative interventions for troubled children & youth.* Toronto, ON: Champion Press.

Hide and Seek Solutions

Activity Theme: Problem Solving	**Time:** 10 – 20 minutes

Goals:

- To increase awareness of problem-solving strategies

Materials:

- Index Cards or Construction Paper
- Solution cards (included)

Preparation:

Photocopy and cut out the solution cards (included) and glue them to index cards or construction paper. Hide these cards throughout the classroom or playground at varying degrees of difficulty.

Description:

The facilitator explains to the students that they are going to play a different kind of hide-and-seek game. The facilitator states that solutions we can use when we are trying to solve a problem are hidden and that the students' job is to find all the cards. When a student finds a card, the facilitator gives the children an example of when that solution could be used. For example, when a student finds the "Get a Timer" card, the facilitator can tell the students that this is a good solution if we are waiting for a turn with a toy. The game continues until all cards are found. The facilitator may place all the solution cards together on a wall or board in the classroom for the students to refer to in the future.

Discussion:

This activity allows students to become aware of many different and appropriate solutions to problems they may encounter at school and home. Students can begin thinking of how to solve problems on their own, increasing their overall problem-solving abilities and independence.

Solution Cards

Get a Teacher

Ask Nicely

Ignore

Play together

Say, "Please Stop."

Say, "Please."

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html
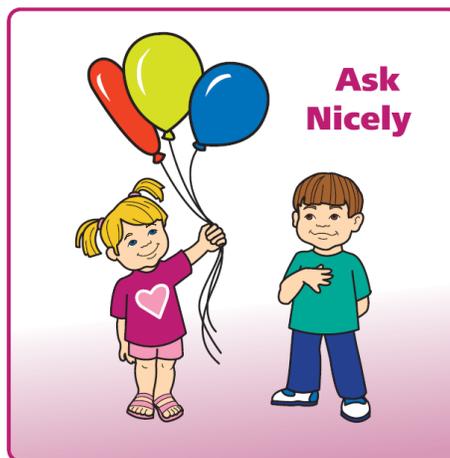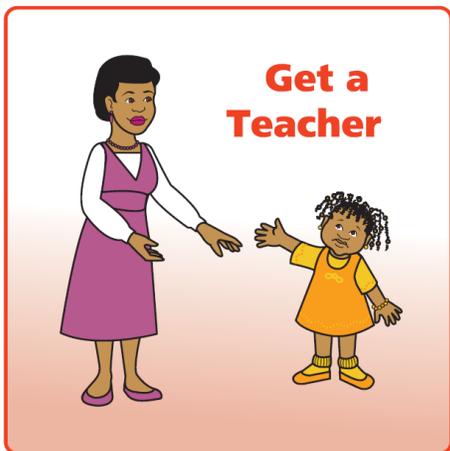
Mindfulness/Body Awareness Activities

Mindfulness and body awareness activities are becoming increasingly common among early childhood education programs. Mindfulness has been shown to increase positive thinking, resiliency, and stress reduction in children. By beginning mindfulness activities at a young age, we are helping to set children up for success as they grow and learn. Similarly, body awareness activities have increased in frequency due to the "Me Too" movement surrounding the importance of consent. By teaching young children the importance of asking permission to touch someone and saying, "No thank you" when they do not want to be touched, we are instilling respect for oneself and others, and establishing the importance of having boundaries and personal space. These activities also help children develop healthy positive social skills such as learning to respond to verbal and nonverbal communication, patience, cooperation, sharing, and instilling positive self-esteem and self-worth.

While all children can benefit from these activities, children who struggle with aggression and difficulties understanding personal space may especially benefit from body awareness activities. These activities model appropriate behaviour in order to help these children modify their current behaviours through mimicking the positive behaviours that their peers engage in.

The following activities help to promote these important skills through positive interaction and touch, modelling behaviour, and opportunities to show kindness to others.

Hugs

Activity Theme: Social Skills	**Time:** 10 – 15 minutes

Goals:

- To promote positive social behaviour
- To teach the concept of boundaries and personal space
- To facilitate assertiveness

Materials:

- Teddy bear stickers (enough for each student)
- Small gift box
- Message labels (included)
- Sheets of tissue paper (preferably different or alternating colours)
- Tape

Preparation:

Place the teddy bear stickers in the gift box, then wrap the box in layers of tissue paper—one layer for each student. Between each layer, place a message label from the list provided. Ensure that the inner most layer is the one which reads: "Everyone in this group has done a great job learning about hugs and safe touching. Open this gift and share it with the group."

Description:

The teacher has the students sit in a circle, then announces that they have a gift for the group. The teacher then announces that before they can find out what it is, every student must take turns unwrapping a layer and follow the directions written under each layer. The teacher hands the gift to the first student to unwrap a layer, then the gift is passed around the circle after each message is read and completed. When the gift is opened, the teacher can help distribute the stickers to each student, reminding them that the bear sticker represents the bear hugs they gave to their classmates throughout the activity.

Discussion:

This is a quick activity that can be used in tandem with another social skills activity if desired. This activity allows students to learn about safe touching and respecting personal boundaries. Further, students learn assertiveness when they are given the opportunity to ask for hugs or decline a hug. Some children do not like being touched; therefore, this activity is adaptive to many children and allows them to exercise their rights and boundaries. It is important that the teacher be present and aware during the activity to ensure that all children feel safe and comfortable.

Adapted from: Lowenstein, L. (1965). *Creative interventions for troubled children & youth.* Toronto, ON: Champion Press.

The Hugs Activity: Message Labels

Everyone in this group has done a great job learning about hugs and safe touching. Open this gift and share it with the group.	We all need a hug once in a while. Ask someone in the group for a hug.
It's okay to say "NO" if you don't want to be touched. Practice saying, "I don't want to be touched right now."	You can make yourself feel good by hugging yourself! Practice giving yourself a hug.
Sometimes we don't like it when other people come too close to us. Practice standing an arm's length away from another person in the group.	A hug can feel great as long as you aren't hugged too hard. Practice giving someone in the group a hug without hugging them too hard. Don't forget to ask that person's permission before you give a hug!
It's time for a group hug! Have everyone in the group stand in a close circle and give a group hug. Remember, you don't have to join the group hug if you don't want to.	Hugs are for people we know and trust. We don't hug strangers, like people we don't know at the grocery store! Practice giving a hug to someone in the group you know and trust. Don't forget to ask permission before you give a hug!
It's okay if another person doesn't want a hug when we ask them, and they say "NO". We can say "That's okay," and ask another person instead!	We hug people we know and trust. Name some people that you like to hug!

Adapted from: Lowenstein, L. (1965). *Creative interventions for troubled children & youth.* Toronto, ON: Champion Press.

Rain

Activity Theme: Stress Management	**Time:** 10 – 15 minutes

Goals:
- To practice safe, positive touch
- To communicate feelings about touch
- To teach students how to help others relieve stress

Materials:
- The "Rain" script (included)

Preparation:

No advanced preparation is needed for this activity. However, a pre-recorded or downloaded track of soothing music or rain sounds could be used.

Description:

The facilitator instructs the students to find a partner (or picks partners for the students) and has one partner stand or sit behind the other. The facilitator explains to the students that they will be doing a relaxing activity in which partners will take turns helping each other relax. Before beginning the activity, remind students about safe, positive touch; students ask permission before touching their partner, and can say "stop" at any time during the activity if they do not want to be touched, and only touch their partner gently.

Once students are feeling comfortable, the facilitator reads the Rain script included.

After reading the script, the facilitator asks students how they feel. Do they feel calm? Are they more relaxed and less tense? Did it feel as if rain was pouring down on them? How did they feel during the activity?

Have the partners switch places and perform the activity again so all students have a chance in both roles.

Discussion:

This activity allows students to practice how to provide their partner with gentle touch that leads to a reduction in stress. Students have an opportunity to say "yes" or "no" to touch and learn how to help others relieve stress with their permission. Students are also given the opportunity to respond to how they feel before, during, and after the activity.

Adaptation

This script can be changed or adapted based on the needs of the students; it can be longer or shorter depending on the amount of time available or depending on the age group. This activity can also be modelled by the facilitator or another adult to ensure students are giving the correct touch.

Adapted from: Belknap, M. (2006). *Stress relief for kids: Taming your dragons*. New York, NY: Whole Person Associates.

Rain Script

After you have asked your partner if it is okay to touch them and they have said "yes", ask your partner to close their eyes. If that is uncomfortable for them, they can keep their eyes open.

Pretend that your fingertips are like raindrops.

Tap lightly up and down on your partner's back and shoulders.

Now let your raindrops fall gently on your partner's head.

Ask your partner how that feels.

If your partner says it's okay, let your raindrops become faster.

Ask your partner how that feels.

Only do what feels comfortable to them.

If you're the partner getting rained on, take three deep breaths.

Thank your partner, and switch places.

Adapted from: Belknap, M. (2006). *Stress relief for kids: Taming your dragons*. New York, NY: Whole Person Associates.

Musical Warm Fuzzies

Activity Theme: Social Skills	**Time:** 10 – 15 minutes

Goals:

-   To practice giving and receiving compliments
-   To increase positive interactions and self-esteem

Materials:

-   A music CD and stereo, or online music player and speaker

Preparation:

Other than having music handy, no advanced preparation is needed for this activity.

Description:

For this activity, it is advised to complete the "Compliments" activity first in order to provide a good transition. The facilitator starts the activity by reminding the students that we can give each other compliments to show kindness, such as "You are funny" or "You are a good listener". For this activity, the facilitator has the students stand in an area free of obstacles (such as a carpet) and begin dancing and moving around with the music. The facilitator then instructs the children that when the music stops, they must freeze in place and turn to the person closest to them and give them a compliment. If students are having trouble thinking of compliments on their own, they can ask for help and the facilitator can provide them with some examples. Restart the music and let the students continue to move around. Stop the music three or four more times to allow students to freeze, turn to a friend, and think of a compliment, or as many times as necessary.

Discussion:

This activity is similar to the "Compliments" activity in that it provides students with the opportunity to learn and use positive compliments with others. This helps students to learn positive social skills as well as increase their self-esteem.

Adaptation

If students are struggling with the concept or giving compliments, you can simplify this activity by having the facilitator walk around to give compliments to students while they are frozen. This models the behaviour and the types of compliments you are looking for and gives the students a better idea of what a compliment looks like.

The Kindness Tree

Activity Theme: Social Skills	**Time:** 20 – 30 minutes

Goals:

- To encourage acts of kindness and group cohesion
- To decrease bullying and tattling behaviours

Materials:

- Construction paper (brown for tree trunk, green or red/yellow/orange for leaves)
- Markers

Preparation:

- To help the activity run smoothly, the tree trunk can be created ahead of time and taped to a wall in the classroom. This tree trunk can be as big or a small as needed, depending on available supplies and classroom size. The facilitator can also cut leaves out of construction paper which will be used to write and document acts of kindness. An example of a Kindness Tree as been included for reference.

Description:

The facilitator starts the activity by showing the students the tree and asks them to help make the tree grow leaves by doing acts of kindness. The facilitator can help the students think of acts of kindness as examples such as by saying kind words, sharing, helping others, and giving to others. The facilitator can then ask the students if they saw any acts of kindness this week. As students answer, the facilitator can write the acts of kindness on leaves and give them to the students to stick onto the tree. Remind the students to watch for more acts of kindness throughout the week so they can add more leaves to the tree. End the activity by asking the students why kindness is important; this allows for reinforcement of the golden rule, or other important life lessons.

Discussion:

The Kindness Tree has been utilized by many schools and classrooms to encourage kindness amongst students and decrease student bullying. This activity can be used over a long period of time (such as a whole school year) or just temporarily (for example, for the month of November to coincide with World Kindness Day). The overall goal, however, is to increase student awareness about the acts of kindness that are displayed in the classroom, which encourages students to display kind behaviour themselves.

Example Kindness Tree

Heidelberg Primary School. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.heidelbergps.vic.edu.au/student-wellbeing/

Compliments

Activity Theme: Social Skills	**Time:** 10 – 15 minutes

Goals:

- To learn positive ways to compliment a friend
- To promote positive social skills and self-esteem
- To combat bullying

Materials:

No materials are required for this activity.

Preparation:

No advanced preparation is needed for this activity.

Description:

This activity works well if it follows the "Kindness Tree" activity; it provides a natural transition for this activity. The facilitator begins by telling the students that one way we can be kind to each other is by giving compliments. Ask the students to brainstorm some compliments they could say to a friend (trying to focus on things other than appearance). The facilitator can also provide examples to the students, such as:

- You are funny
- You are good at…
- You tell good stories
- You are fun to play with
- You have great ideas
- You work really hard
- You are a good listener
- You are kind to others

After the facilitator elicits examples from the students, they can then ask the students how they feel when someone gives them a compliment, then wrap up the activity by asking the students to turn to a person beside them and give them a compliment.

Discussion:

This activity provides students with the opportunity to learn about positive compliments, how to give compliments to others, and how one feels when they receive compliments. This helps to increase positive social skills and self-esteem.

Bibliotherapy Activities

Bibliotherapy allows children the opportunity to learn about important concepts through another person's perspective; typically, through the main character of a story. By listening to the story and interacting with the main character, young children can understand and process new information from the story. Children can develop empathy by relating to how the main character feels throughout the story, develop problem solving skills by helping to come up with solutions to the main character's problem or develop social skills by modelling the social behaviours and communication skills from the main character.

Bibliotherapy is a useful tool for educators because stories can easily be incorporated into lessons along with other activities to help teach specific skills. Learning about new concepts can be easily reinforced using storybooks which state the skill in the child's language, through another child's perspective.

Bibliotherapy is useful for all different lessons and skills and many specific populations which may be present in a classroom, such as anxiety, anger, bullying, and even to explain specific disorders such as autism.

This final section includes five storybooks that can accompany learning and development of social skills and problem-solving skills. You can find more resources and links to more bibliotherapy books under the Helpful Resources section on page 54.

Gigi and Lulu's Gigantic Fight

Book Theme: Social Skills	**Author:** Pamela Duncan Edwards	**Age:** 3 – 7

Plot Summary:

Gigi and Lulu's Gigantic Fight is the drama of young school friends contained in a short story. Gigi and Lulu are best friends and do EVERYTHING together. They dress alike, they eat the same foods, and they elicit cheerful and exasperated adult comments about peas and pods. One day they fight over tumbled blocks and declare their friendship finished. When their teacher declares "Twin Day", Gigi and Lucy bring and wear their favorite things to school and are surprised to see their many differences.

Main Message:

Gigi and Lulu learn that their many differences do not bar them from friendship, after all half the fun of friendship is the things we are exposed to that we would never have chosen. Instead of being peas, they can be themselves.

- K, S. (2007, October 4). [Review of the book *Gigi and lulu's gigantic fight*]. *LibraryThing*. Retrieved from http://www.librarything.com/work/3414018/reviews/21594419

Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus

Book Theme: Problem Solving	**Author:** Mo Willems	**Age:** 2 – 7

Plot Summary:

A bus driver begins the story by expressing to readers the importance of not letting the pigeon drive the bus while he is gone. However, the persuasive pigeon spends the entirety of the book trying to talk us into letting him drive the bus.

- Willard, T. & Schlassa, S. (n.d.). Don't let the pigeon drive the bus. *Teaching Children Philosophy*. Retrieved from https://www.teachingchildrenphilosophy.org/BookModule/DontLetThePigeonDriveTheBus

Main Message:

Sometimes persuasion and perseverance don't always pay off, but it's great to try and come to compromises and solutions.

Don't Let the Pigeon Stay Up Late!

Book Theme: Problem Solving	**Author:** Mo Willems	**Age:** 2 – 7

Plot Summary:

Hurrying away to brush his teeth, the pajama-clad bus driver implores readers not to let his feathered friend stay up late. Youngsters are thrust into the role of caregiver as the puerile pigeon attempts to talk his way out of the inevitable, coming up with requests that range from manipulative (I hear there's a good show about birds on TV tonight. Should be very educational) to cajoling (Y'know, we never get to talk anymore. Tell me about your day) to classic (Can I have a glass of water?).

- Summary Retrieved from https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/191117.Don_t_Let_the_Pigeon_Stay_Up_Late_

Main Message:

Sometimes persuasion and perseverance don't always pay off, but it's great to try and come to compromises and solutions.

I Did It, I'm Sorry

Book Theme: Problem Solving	**Author:** Caralyn Buehner	**Age:** 5 – 8

Plot Summary:

Do your words and actions help or hurt? In this humorous guide to good behavior, Ollie Octopus, Bucky Beaver, and their friends help point the way to good behavior. For example, when Howie Hogg is finished playing with straws, sticks and bricks at Grandma's house, he should: (a) Tweeze his snout hairs. (b) Clean up his mess. (c) Tell Grandma she lives in a pigsty. The correct answer to each behavior problem is hidden in the pictures.

- Summary Retrieved from https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/711438.I_Did_It_I_m_Sorry

Main Message:

The correct answers to each question teach children about good behaviour and problem solving.

It Wasn't My Fault

Book Theme: Problem Solving	**Author:** Helen Lester	**Age:** 4 – 7

Plot Summary:

When accidents happen to Murdley Gurdson, they are usually his own fault, but when a bird lays an egg on Murdley's head one day, he tries hard to find someone else to blame.

- Summary Retrieved from https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/883058.It_Wasn_t_My_Fault

Main Message:

The importance of taking responsibility for our own actions.

Helpful Resources

ADHD:

https://www.additudemag.com/teaching-strategies-for-students-with-adhd/

http://www.teachadhd.ca/Pages/default.aspx

https://www.adhdchildhood.com/adhd-teacher-student-resources

Anger:

https://lynnenamka.com/anger-management/techniques-teachers-therapists/

https://www.educationworld.com/teachers/resources-students-anger-management

https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Browse/Price-Range/Free/Search:anger

Anxiety:

https://www.anxietycanada.com/educators

http://www.worrywisekids.org/node/40

https://www.teachspeced.ca/anxiety-management

Bibliotherapy:

http://clearlakechildrenscenter.com/resources/bibliotherapy/

https://www.teachers.net/gazette/MAY09/bundrick/

https://confidentcounselors.com/2017/07/24/15-must-have-books-elementary-school-counselors/

Children's Mental Health Information:

https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/

https://childmind.org/audience/for-educators/

Learning Disorders:

https://childmind.org/article/recognizing-learning-disorders-in-the-classroom/

http://www.ldonline.org/educators

https://www.ldac-acta.ca/causes/for-parents/#1513265621455-6fcac885-92ad

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    http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html

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    counseling programs. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

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    https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/191117.Don_t_Let_the_Pigeon_Stay_Up_Late_

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    https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/883058.It_Wasn_t_My_Fault

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    https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/711438.I_Did_It_I_m_Sorry

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K, S. (2007, October 4). [Review of the book *Gigi and lulu's gigantic fight*]. *LibraryThing*. Retrieved from http://www.librarything.com/work/3414018/reviews/21594419

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https://www.teachingchildrenphilosophy.org/BookModule/DontLetThePigeonDriveThe

Bus

Appendix A

Parent Information Handout

                                                                                Date

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child's class is participating in a new program titled: "PlaySchooler". This program is used through the help of our school counsellor, _____, to help increase the social and emotional learning and development of all students.

Through this program, your child will learn important lessons about emotional expression, stress management, problem solving and social skills by participating in fun daily or weekly activities designed to target social and emotional learning skills.

Your child may come home with some of these activities and talk about what they learned at school. Occasionally, you will receive a handout about what your child has been learning so you can be kept up to date and, if you wish, continue your child's learning and development at home by discussing these activities with your child.

Your child may choose to participate or not participate in the activities at school; they will always be given the option to say "yes" or "no". However, these activities are designed to easily fit into our daily and weekly routine, and they may not even know when these activities are being performed—they will just see them as fun!

If you would like more information about this program or have any questions about your child's participation in this program, please do not hesitate to let us know.

We can't wait to see the growth and development in your child as a result of this program.

Sincerely,

_____   _____

Teacher Name & Signature   School Counsellor Name & Signature

Parent Information Handout – Emotional Expression Unit

Date

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child's class is participating in a new program titled: "PlaySchooler". This program is used through the help of our school counsellor, _____, to help increase the social and emotional learning and development of all students.

Through this program, your child will learn important lessons about emotional expression, stress management, problem solving and social skills by participating in fun daily or weekly activities designed to target social and emotional learning skills.

This week, your child may be participating in several activities that deal with emotional expression. This includes learning about different emotions, how to mimic these emotions with our faces and bodies, and how to identify emotions in our friends.

If you would like to help further their learning about emotions at home, you can ask them about the 6 emotion faces we talk about at school: happy, sad, mad, surprised, scared, and sick.

If you have any questions about this unit or would like more detail on what activities we will be completing, please do not hesitate to ask!

Sincerely,

_____   _____

Teacher Name & Signature   School Counsellor Name & Signature

Parent Information Handout – Stress Management Unit

Date

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child's class is participating in a new program titled: "PlaySchooler". This program is used through the help of our school counsellor, _____, to help increase the social and emotional learning and development of all students.

Through this program, your child will learn important lessons about emotional expression, stress management, problem solving and social skills by participating in fun daily or weekly activities designed to target social and emotional learning skills.

This week, your child may be participating in several activities that deal with stress management. This includes learning about how to identify when we are feeling stress and different ways we can cope with stress.

If you would like to help further their learning about stress management at home, you can ask them about the kinds of things they can do when feeling stressed to make themselves feel better. You can reinforce ideas that we have come up with together such as playing an active game, eating healthy food, talk to friends or family, or do a relaxing activity like drawing or taking a bath.

If you have any questions about this unit or would like more detail on what activities we will be completing, please do not hesitate to ask!

Sincerely,

_____   _____

Teacher Name & Signature   School Counsellor Name & Signature

Parent Information Handout – Problem Solving Unit

Date

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child's class is participating in a new program titled: "PlaySchooler". This program is used through the help of our school counsellor, _____, to help increase the social and emotional learning and development of all students.

Through this program, your child will learn important lessons about emotional expression, stress management, problem solving and social skills by participating in fun daily or weekly activities designed to target social and emotional learning skills.

This week, your child may be participating in several activities that deal with problem solving. This includes learning positive ways to deal with problems and reading books about others and how they solve their problems.

If you would like to help further their learning about problem solving at home, you can ask them about the good ways they can solve a problem such as by asking nicely, getting a teacher or grown up's help, using a timer, sharing, or taking turns.

If you have any questions about this unit or would like more detail on what activities we will be completing, please do not hesitate to ask!

Sincerely,

_____   _____

Teacher Name & Signature   School Counsellor Name & Signature

Parent Information Handout – Social Skills Unit

Date

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child's class is participating in a new program titled: "PlaySchooler". This program is used through the help of our school counsellor, _____, to help increase the social and emotional learning and development of all students.

Through this program, your child will learn important lessons about emotional expression, stress management, problem solving and social skills by participating in fun daily or weekly activities designed to target social and emotional learning skills.

This week, your child may be participating in several activities that deal with social skills. This includes learning about kind words to say to others, how to give compliments, and how to respect other's bodies and saying, "No thank you", if you don't want to be touched.

If you would like to help further their learning about social skills at home, you can ask them about ways to be kind to others, the kinds of compliments friends like to hear, and what they can say before they touch someone, or someone touches them.

If you have any questions about this unit or would like more detail on what activities we will be completing, please do not hesitate to ask!

Sincerely,

_____   _____

Teacher Name & Signature   School Counsellor Name & Signature