

A publication of the Canadian Association for Play Therapy (CAPT)

# Playground

Fall / Winter 2023

Seven Valuable Lessons  
from an Expressive Play  
Therapy Workshop

Healing Spaces

Working with  
Marginalized Youth -  
Part One:  
The Community Art  
Project - Using Art  
and Play to Engage  
"At-Risk" Youth





# CAPT Foundation Play Therapy Training 2024



Training will be presented on-line in one or two-day trainings with individual instructors over a period of six weeks. Each day offers 6 educational units toward the 180 educational units required for Foundation Play Therapy Training for Certification as a Play Therapist.

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- Theraplay as a Play Therapy Model

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- Play Therapy with Abused Children  
Day 1: Physical and Emotional Abuse  
Day 2: Sexual Abuse

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# Playground

Canadian Association for Play Therapy

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# Message from the President

## Dear Members,

As the summer days start to get shorter and the local farmers sell their delicious corn, I sit quietly husking, thinking about all of the amazing things I get to witness as President of CAPT. I see so many people using the Powers of Play to address issues with their clients and it makes me feel grateful to be a part of this incredible organization. Thank you all for the work you do and for creating space for people to play out their trauma and life challenges in amazingly powerful ways.



In May we gathered both in person and virtually at the CAPT Annual General Meeting and Conference. This was such an incredible experience. It was the first time we did a hybrid delivery model, and apart from our microphones going through batteries a mile-a-minute, it was a really smooth and powerful experience. I met so many wonderful people and heard about the ground-breaking and heartfelt work they do. We explored Grief together and at times I looked around the room and noticed how impactful and powerful the training was. Thanks to our incredible presenters, we learned new things and added new tools and approaches to our Play Therapy tool box.

I would like to congratulate Donna Starling for being such an amazing leader, volunteer and mentor for our association. Her dedication to CAPT as a volunteer earned her the prestigious Betty Bedard Bidwell Award and I can't think of a more deserving person. She has shown so much dedication and compassion to the world of Play Therapy. Volunteers are the driving force behind our organization and CAPT would not be where it is today without the tireless and selfless work of our volunteers. Thank you to each one of you.

I also want to congratulate Lori Wareham who earned the Monica Herbert Award for her remarkable contributions to Play Therapy. Her outstanding examples of clinical work using Play Therapy are a model for us all to aspire to. She has made so many positive contributions to the lives of her clients, to Play Therapy Research, and to the various committees and projects that she has supported over the years. Thank you so much, Lori.

We received strong support from our sponsors at the conference, and it is with great pleasure that I have the privilege of thanking them here. I am overflowing with gratitude. Thanks go to;

- Shannon Wampler from Play Therapy Supply who sponsored the Friday Training
- Hilary McKee from The Grief and Trauma Healing Centre Inc. who sponsored a coffee break
- Theresa Fraser from Maritime Play Therapy who sponsored two coffee breaks
- Bert Sabourin from Sandtastik who sponsored the event through being an exhibitor
- Jan Yordy who sponsored the event through being an exhibitor
- Greg Zachernuk from Sand Trays Etc. who sponsored the event by both being an exhibitor and also by donating one of his legendary Sand Trays that was awarded in our draw
- Ampersand Printing sponsored no less than four coffee breaks

Thank you again for all your support! I look forward to seeing everyone again next spring.

Kevin St. Louis

President of the Canadian Association for Play Therapy

# Update from your Executive Director

## Fall 2023,

I hope that all CAPT members and partners are enjoying the summer months!

This Fall issue of Playground Magazine, with a focus on adolescent and adult clients, contains several articles from CAPT members, as well as highlights from the inaugural hybrid (in person and via zoom) CAPT Annual General Meeting and Conference held this past May 5 & 6, 2023 in Niagara Falls.



The CAPT Board of Directors last met in June and will start up again with regular meetings beginning in September. There is much to look forward to for the remainder of 2023 and into 2024, including:

- The completion of the CAPT Strategic Plan and priorities (Fall 2023)
- Planning for International Play Therapy Week 2024 (see Spring 2023 issue of Playground for a CAPT recap of the inaugural week in 2023)
- Phase 2 of updating the CAPT website and member database
- Monthly Certification Q&A zoom meetings with members
- Membership Renewals, Benefits and Growth initiatives
- 2024 Annual General Meeting and Conference Planning
- Training opportunities for 2024 and beyond

Thank you to the hard work of the Publications Committee to put together this issue over the summer months. As a volunteer driven association, CAPT relies on the help of volunteers to fill important roles on CAPT Committees and projects. If you feel you have an interest in supporting CAPT as a volunteer, be sure to contact one of our Committee Chairs or our office at any time. I look forward to connecting with you should you be interested in volunteering with CAPT and encourage you to contact me with any questions.

Wishing you a wonderful rest of Summer and Fall from the CAPT head office.

Scott Kettles  
Executive Director, CAPT

# Working with Marginalized Youth – Part One:

## The Community Art Project – Using Art and Play to Engage “At-Risk” Youth



In the year leading up to the pandemic, I had the immense pleasure of working with a local Homeless Youth Shelter in the development and delivery of a homelessness prevention programme for marginalized, street involved youth, and youth who were housing insecure or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

According to *Without a Home: The National Youth Homelessness Survey*, “20% of the homeless population in Canada is comprised of youth between the ages of 13-24. In a given year, there are at least 35,000-40,000 youth experiencing homelessness.” (Gaetz, O’Grady, Kidd, & Schwan, 2016). The problem was a big one, and new ways to address this haunting prevalence are being explored across Canada and throughout the world. This was a progressive intervention at the time, as there were few similar programmes being offered as a means of prevention.

The initial stages of the initiative were developed with the best of intentions; to engage youth in a programme that would provide them with a connection to other youth like them, an outlet to explore the challenges they face, and to develop sense of community that would reduce the feelings of isolation and the experience of stigma among this population. It was felt that taking action to include “at-risk” and marginalized youth in prevention programmes is an important way to reduce overrepresentation of youth in homeless populations.

Meetings were held weekly at the local library. At the root of the initial purpose of this initiative was a hope that the programme would foster relationships that would increase their effective use of community services through providing resources such as haircuts and health supports, and to broker connections to caring adults and homeless outreach and prevention staff that they could access prior to a family breakdown or other situation requiring them to leave their homes. The programme often had health nurses and other community support people attend and sit along side the delivery staff in this process. The staff running the programme wanted to reduce local youths’ reliance on the Shelter System and intervene earlier to avoid the challenges and systematic trauma that results from shelter use and street involvement. At first the programme was delivered in a social / recreational format in which they used themes such as “Super Heroes” or “t-shirt making” wherein youth and homeless prevention staff would have a meal and then watch a movie or do an activity that the staff thought would interest and engage this population. Attendance was low and sporadic; the programme often had only a small handful of youth attend and many did so only once or twice. Attempts were made at reaching out to “at-risk” youth and inviting them to attend, reducing barriers to their attendance such as providing transportation or connecting with service providers and garnering their support in helping youth attend. This did not have a significant impact in the uptake of participation.

Clearly, the programme was missing something in terms of approach. When I reviewed the programme in its

current iteration, it became apparent that, based on my experience working in the field of Mental Health and my knowledge of youth homelessness throughout the past 20 years of working with this population, the effects of trauma, structural inequality, social isolation, stigma, poverty, and marginalization all played a role in the programme's limited success. As a team, we took a deeper look at the Canadian Definition of Homeless as developed by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, which states:

"Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, unhealthy, unsafe, stressful and distressing."  
*(Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2012)*

Further, as an Indigenous person, it was important for me to express our need to use a traditional lens to understand how homelessness was defined and affecting our local youth, as many of our shelter users identified as Indigenous and this population is typically overrepresented in the Shelter System (Uppal, 2022). We referred to the definition of Indigenous Homelessness as published by the University of Calgary;

"Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous world views. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships."  
*(Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness, 2012)*

Further, we took a look at the concept of Social Determinants of Health and how these elements were impacting the youth we were trying to serve. The World Health Organization lists the following key social elements that affect our wellbeing, however there are arguably more:

- Income and social protection
  - Education
  - Unemployment and job insecurity
  - Working life conditions
  - Food insecurity
  - Housing, basic amenities and the environment
  - Early childhood development
  - Social inclusion and non-discrimination
  - Structural conflict
  - Access to affordable health services of decent quality.
- (The World Health Organization, 2023)*

We recognized that youth experiencing housing insecurity and who were "at risk" of experiencing homelessness may experience several challenges at once from the list of the Social Determinants of Health and wanted to develop a programme that would address some, or all of these challenges. At first, our focus was on inclusion – addressing isolation, discrimination and the stigma experienced by this population. As the programme developed, a stronger focus emerged on addressing Mental Health struggles, and providing an outlet to explore our shared experience together – one that was rooted deeply in the Powers of Play and the evidence-based techniques of engaging and serving marginalized populations through a Play Therapy Lens.

The first thing that we did was partner with a seasoned Play Therapist, a pioneer in the field, who deeply understood non-directive engagement and using the Powers of Play to address marginalization and isolation. Together, this therapist and I created space for exploration and expression. The lens we used was based on concepts explored in the book "Play Therapy with Adults", in which Christine Caldwell in chapter 13 writes "...play seems to function as a protective mechanism against the costs of this work – a buffer against stress, a support during life transitions, a means of forming bonds and alliances, and a jump start for creativity and problem solving". She goes on to state that "...play and other creative activities tend to cause the whole brain to operate, but in a cooler, more cortically efficient way". (Caldwell, 2003) The Second shift we made was that we partnered with a person with experience running community-based art projects with marginalized populations. What resulted was something beautiful.

We set some programme directives and shifted the way we structured the programme. We used a strong Person-Based Approach to the delivery of the programme and

ensured we respected the following approaches to intervention;

- Listen to the youth. Ask them to tell you their stories.
- Follow their lead. Don't push them. Relationships take time to develop, especially if the youth has experienced many untrustworthy adults in their lives.
- Support youth in the way they want to be supported. This builds trust.
- Once trust and a supportive relationship is built, youth will feel more comfortable engaging in programming, supportive services and other resources. Don't push them into these programmes. If they say they are not ready, be understanding and patient.
- Be encouraging and positive. They will get through this!
- Meet the youth "where they are at" – the needs of youth experiencing housing insecurity and isolation are as diverse as the youth themselves.
- Adapt your approach and case management in a way that is client centered, placing their unique views and needs first.

Next, we looked at how to ensure that the programme was as low-barrier as possible. For example, we developed the programme with an understanding that:

- Some youth experiencing housing insecurity and risk of homelessness will be drug users. Be compassionate to the difficulties associated with addiction.
- Understand the different approaches to working in a low-barrier setting, including flexibility, reflexivity and, wherever possible, harm reduction techniques.
- Don't judge or make assumptions about youth based on their presentation or history. Treat each youth as an individual and approach them with dignity and respect.
- Monitor and be extra vigilant for signs of mental health distress, trauma and overdose and have resources available such as brief counselling techniques and tools such as Naloxone available and be trained in how to use them.
- Create a sense of a team and use your team to help you to make challenging decisions related to safety with the programme participants. Don't make difficult decisions without support and direction from each other or external service providers.
- Many youth will present with barriers to engaging them in effective services, including Mental Health challenges, involvement with the Justice System and deep and persistent Trauma. Don't let any of those barriers stop you from making every opportunity for positive change and growth available to them.

We continued to meet at the library, but we no longer focused on social and recreational programming. We used playful and client-centered approaches to art making. Our approach was non-directive. We did not instruct the youth in art techniques or suggest particular outcomes, rather, we provided opportunities and tools to create art together. We supported the creative process through providing space for youth to express their experiences in safe and non-judgmental ways. For example, the use of collage, poetry, sculpture, paint and ink techniques were used as a means to increase the comfort and belonging of participants.

Sometimes participants wanted to do their own projects, and this was encouraged and supported. Sometimes they just wanted to talk and process their week, and this was made easier through low-barrier art projects such as art based games and "playing" with different mediums. Conversations happened as we molded clay together and typed out poetry on old typewriters. Eventually a deep sense of community and trust was developed that helped the participants to work together, to acknowledge the challenges they faced, and to feel empowered to have their voices heard. Soon, there emerged a deep sense of community among participants. They supported each other and respected everyone's role as an artist and as an important member of the community.

With two therapists and an experienced community artist as co-participants in the art making, many powerful discussions ensued. Participants spoke to the challenges they were facing in deep and powerful ways. The art we were creating together developed a venue for some youth to raise elements related to their trauma experience and we provided opportunities for the participants to explore the social, economic and mental health challenges they faced in a safe and open setting. We didn't direct youth into these conversations, they brought these concepts to our space and we honored that.

Participation in this new iteration of the initiative increased dramatically. Each week we had youth return and new youth join us. Soon, we were beginning to outgrow the space at the library and the momentum created through this initiative was growing more and more with each week.

The work we did together culminated in an Art Exhibition (see image on next page). Youth participated in an art show where their expression and views on their lives were displayed for the community to see. This made the participants feel heard and valued. They felt a part of something bigger and greater than their individual struggles and their voices were validated. Hundreds of





## **Fingerprints: The marks we make**

We've been making art together. Please join us for our first showing and experience how art can close the distance between us.

For the last year, YES has been hosting an art drop-in for youth in the community with the help of local artists. Everyone involved has been growing more and more comfortable with one another, creating together and being vulnerable through their creations.



Come see what we've created, talk to those involved, and if so inclined, make some art together.

**Atelier Ludmila**  
**129 1/2 Hunter Street West**  
**Friday, February 7, 2020**  
**5pm - 6pm: Pre showing**  
**6pm - 10pm: Friday showing**  
**Saturday, February 8, 2020**  
**1pm - 4pm; Saturday showing**

community members engaged with their art and some of the artists engaged with the community in this context. It was so well received by both the community and the participants that we couldn't wait for the next show.

Unfortunately, only a month later, COVID took the world by storm. All in person programming was halted. This was a huge loss for the participants and as such our team had to become extremely creative about how to continue this work and to maintain the community, reduction in isolation and empowerment that we had established. We were not willing to give up on this. So, we developed a new structure and programme which was even more well received and attended than the pre-COVID initiative.

Stay tuned for Part Two of this article in the next edition of Playground Magazine. In Part Two, we will look at the amplification of the sense of isolation that occurred among this population as a result of COVID, the ways in which we adapted the programme to encompass even deeper Play Therapy Techniques and approaches, some of the research that supports this approach, and our need to find a bigger space to accommodate a very large, energetic and amazing group of "at risk" youth. The results of the second iteration of this programme are even more astounding than the first.

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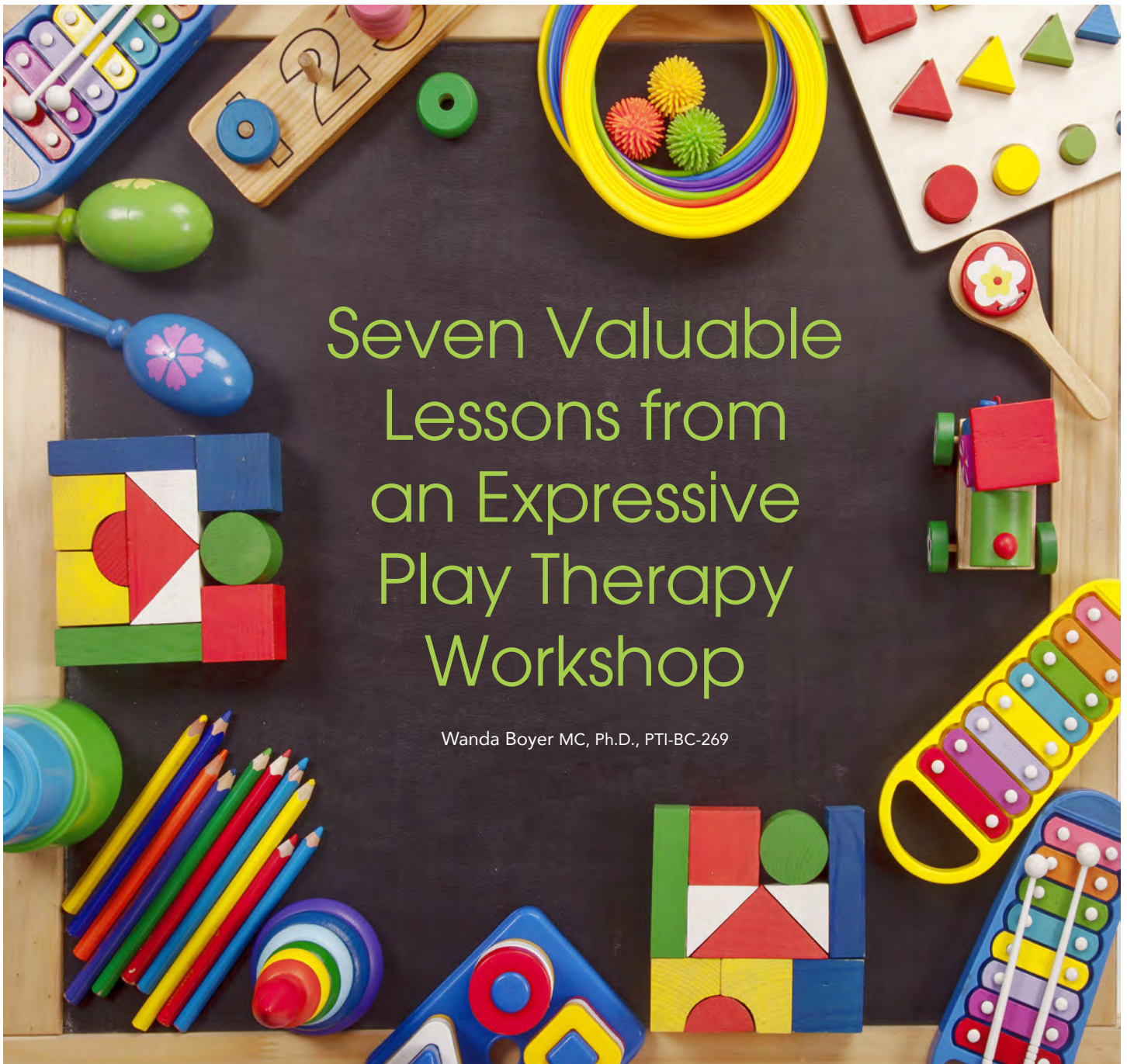
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### **About the Author**

*Kevin St. Louis is the President of the Canadian Association for Play Therapy and is thankful and honoured to be in this role. Kevin began his journey in the Mental Health Field over 25 years ago. Kevin works with clients across the lifespan and is particularly successful working with Children, Youth, and their families. Kevin uses elements of Play Therapy, Art Therapy, Dyadic Developmental Therapy, Nature Therapy, Technology and traditional talk-based approaches to helping. As a person with Kitigan Zibi Anishnabeg heritage, Kevin combines Indigenous approaches to healing with Western theories to create a synergy of approaches that allows him to truly meet clients where they are and to walk with them in their life's journey.*

*Kevin has won various awards for his commitment to community and is a published author. He enjoys technology, playing music, reconnecting with land and spending time in nature with his family.*



# Seven Valuable Lessons from an Expressive Play Therapy Workshop

Wanda Boyer MC, Ph.D., PTI-BC-269

On May 14-16, 2021, Dr. Marie-José Dhaese led a webinar entitled: Expressive Play Therapy for Healing Complex Trauma (Dhaese, 2021). We will focus on seven of the many lessons from this webinar that every play therapist should consider when helping children heal from complex trauma. Each section will describe a core principle, explain why it is important, and provide an example from practical play therapy experience.

## Identify Your Purpose

It is important for play therapists to be aware of who we are, what we value and believe in, and our purpose for doing our therapeutic work. We must reflect on therapeutic processes that are child-centric (Lowenstein, 2021) as a part of our learning and practice of play therapy (Sharpe, 2021; Sun-Reid, 2013). In this way, we can create a tone in

the playroom that reflects our intent. For example, natural floral fragrances, diverse colours and textures, blankets, pillows, modelling clay, wool, rocks, and seashells can ground us and connect us to the physical world and what we value. By being grounded in who we are, we are better able to experience a child and be awe-inspired by who the child is in the moment. To be able to help

children and youth value their own true and golden self, we must know and value our true and golden self (M.-J. Dhaese, personal communication, May 14, 2021). For example, on a daily basis, I consciously reflect on my beliefs and values and identify whom I will help during my day and how I could help them.

### Believe in the Potential of the Child

Children with complex trauma have been bombarded with trauma, so their ability to self-regulate is depleted. They may hate who they are and be allergic to what they need (M.-J. Dhaese, personal communication, May 14, 2021). To move toward self-regulation, a child must learn to be aware of who they are, their value as a human being, and they must feel the hope that you believe in their potential to grow. Within a school setting, I worked with a child who had experienced trauma, and the child was initially reluctant to come to the playroom because it was only for 'special children' (said with a negative connotation). I told them that they were special to me because they were persistent and very willing to work on being calmer and less anxious in class. We must have a manner and way of being that conveys to the child, 'I am there for you.'

### Create Secure Attachments

The big goal is not for the child to attach to others but for the child to attach to self (Dhaese, 2011). When they can attach to self, they can experience self-confidence, self-valuing, the ability to self-validate and self-discipline, and a sense of self-esteem (Dhaese, 2011). That being said, the process of secure attachment can help a child learn to trust and co-regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours at first with us, which then leads to their ability to separate and self-regulate. When we unconditionally accept a child, this leads them to accept their own self. By providing flexibility and freedom within limits that include not hurting self, others, or their context or environment, we tell the child they too can set limits and boundaries. For one child who experienced abuse, explaining these limits then gave them permission to be kind and protective of others, such as when they told me in advance to 'Back away Wanda so that I don't hurt you as I swing this snake around the room.' When we debriefed about the session, they noted that they felt proud of their ability to protect and care for me and others and that they now felt that this was their superpower.

### Be Attuned to the Child

In safety, let the child lead and then follow the lead of the child. Take time, as you follow their lead, to see the child and ask yourself, 'How can I discover who they are?' Focus on who they are, what they are saying, and what they are doing. They may be feeling helpless, triggered, overwhelmed, or in despair, so we must gently try different ways to engage the child to let their true nature come

through activation of their mind, their body, and their spirit (M.-J. Dhaese, personal communication, May 16, 2021). Engaging with the child in this way is like the gentle movement of a boat on water or a rocking chair that first activates us and then provides us with a release of tension via a soothing and calming motion. Be in awe and inspired by all that the child is, in the moment with no projections or reactions (M.-J. Dhaese, personal communication, May 15, 2021), just a loving response based on our therapeutic analog of parent-child gleaming and beaming (Barthel, 2009) and developing a nurturing relationship that heals (Fraser, 2018; Walton, 2019). This unconditional care, attention, and warmth can help keep up the momentum of growth in the child's own time and in their own way (Axline, 1969). For example, I worked with a child who selectively chose to be mute due to prenatal, perinatal, and postnatal trauma they experienced. To adapt to collaboratively setting treatment goals together without imposing speech on the child, we used a pattern of my suggesting candidate goals and having the child give a 'yes' or 'no' nod, with the vigor of the nodding helping to give a sense of 'warmer' or 'colder.' The child wanted to learn how to relax their body and release tension as a way to reduce anxiety so they could speak up for themselves when family members were making disparaging remarks about their selective mutism. In working with children, it is vital that we follow their lead to discover and promote experiences that are child-centered and meaningful to them.

### Create Positive Memories

The environment we create for and with the child can support the creation of positive memories (M.-J. Dhaese, personal communication, May 15, 2021). Nature can come into play (Langley, 2019). Exploring plants and animals in nature can help us create positive memories. As we walk in nature, we have opportunities to discover, see, and explore resiliency in action as we experience captivating elements of nature like the black-eyed Susan and woodland sunflowers providing sweet nectar to other living creatures; wild strawberries that are lush, fragrant, and bear fruit consistently (Suzuki, 2021a); the strength of blackberry bushes that are hard to kill and thrive on adversity; the resounding beauty and cheerfulness of the campanula or bell flower; the long-lasting and calming fragrance of lavender and other healing herbs for bees and butterflies (Suzuki, 2021b). Walks with the child in the community can also provide lasting positive memories of relationship-building. For example, two weeks before termination, a youth, who had experienced sexualized and abusive relations with a parent, and I walked in the community to take a look at an afterschool recreation center for teens that had been recommended for the youth to attend. They were hesitant and needed time to consider the decision and find out more about the place.

The youth agreed that a walk-by to look at the recreation centre couldn't hurt. During our walk together, we took time to look at trees and vegetation along the main street and engaged in conversation about what were our favorite plants and why. At termination, when we spoke about our time together, they indicated the nature walk and the freedom to say 'yes' or 'no' to the program were moments they would remember. Promoting a connection to the natural world is grounding for us as play therapists and can allow the child to feel sufficiently grounded in order to join with us in engaging in a real experience.

## Provide Opportunities Through Self-Expression

At various times, music, art, drama, and physical education have been under threat of being cut from the school curriculum (Bala, 2021). The expressive arts are not extras in a person's life; they make up the memories and experiences one cherishes with one's heart, mind, and spirit (M.-J. Dhaese, personal communication, May 14, 2021). "Art is a way of knowing what it is we actually believe" (Allan, 1995, p. 3). A song, a story, or a cup of tea shared, a healthy snack, mask making, crafts, knitting, sewing, weaving, playing catch, playing with LEGO® (Anderson, 2016), or using technology (McIntyre, 2021, p. 15), these experiences are the pleasures of being human, and they can be tools for self-soothing, self-modulation of emotional responses, self-confidence, and self-awareness. For example, in a school setting, the children and I created signs to indicate that the playroom was occupied. One child, who had experienced the trauma of domestic violence, drew a picture of us together in a rowboat battling big waves on the ocean. When I asked them to tell me about the picture, they told me that it showed us working together to steer the boat through very choppy waves and get us safely back to shore. In this case, the expressive art of drawing gave the child the courage to voice their needs in a symbolic manner that we were able to interpret and work on collaboratively.

## Every Session is the Birth of a New Self

The flow of the session and the traditions that we collaboratively create with the child can promote a sense of rebirth in every session. The hope for rebirth is not only necessary for the potential for the child to gain personal resources to learn how to self-soothe and self-modulate their emotional responses, but it is also a way to ensure that each session is its own universe for the child and play therapist (in case the current session is or becomes the last). A session's opening experiences together with the child using the expressive arts, such as a culinary engagement with healthy food, can provide consistency and a welcoming into the playroom (M.-J. Dhaese, personal communication, May 15, 2021). Experiences in the middle of a session that make available avenues for

self-expression are like the delicious centre of a cream-filled cookie, and the culminating experience in a session can allow the child time to celebrate their achievements and experiences in a way that is meaningful for them through drawings, poems, songs such as 'Happy Birthday' (Rebirth day), physical exercises, meditation, and a goodbye virtual handshake. For example, at the end of sessions with a youth who experienced post traumatic stress from living with a parent with mental illness, we would reflect on their treatment goal and achievements, they would draw how they aimed to work on their goals before our next session, we would engage in a deep and calming meditative experience, and then we would end with our personally developed handshake. Each session was compartmentalized and sacred so that no matter what might happen in their life, during our session together they had lived a 'life-time' of calming and safe relations with someone who is unconditionally inspired by them.

## Conclusion

The playroom is a place for self-expression, safety in risk-taking, and self-care. It is a place where, a child can become aware or sometimes reacquainted with who they are, what they want, what they need, and what they don't want (M.-J. Dhaese, personal communication, May 14, 2021). Our practice is not perfect. When considering the seven core principles I derived from Dr. Marie-José Dhaese's webinar, we can walk with the child in our care so that they know they are not alone; we can listen to them and let them lead us to forms of expression that they find soothing and fulfilling; we can co-regulate their engagement with the natural and human world; and then with time, patience, and hope, we can support their self-regulation and optimism in spite of the challenges they face in life.

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## About the Author

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This spring, the Canadian Association for Play Therapy was pleased to offer our Annual General Meeting and Conference. For the first time since 2019, attendees were able to gather in person. We also made the events available online, so that the opportunity to attend was broadly inclusive.

We all gathered in beautiful Niagara Falls, Ontario. The Niagara Region is situated on treaty land. This land is steeped in the rich history of the First Nations such as the Hattiwendaronk, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinaabe, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

The conference was the first one organized by our Executive Director, Scott Kettles. Scott and his team curated every detail throughout the conference and ensured all requirements were executed to perfection. Thank you, Scott and his team!

This year, the focus of the conference was on navigating grief and loss. As mental health clinicians, we are profoundly aware of the impacts the events of these past three years have had upon our communities. While we all experience losses differently, we have collectively encountered grief during the COVID pandemic with families, friends, and our clients.

Andrea Warnick, RN, MA, RP, started the first day of the conference with her Keynote presentation entitled: "Juggling the Joy and Sorrow: Supporting Healthy Grief in Children, Families and Ourselves." Her talk was followed by the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Kevin St. Louis, Canadian Association for Play Therapy President, hosted the AGM. This was Kevin's first time as host, and he did a wonderful job leading everyone through the agenda. Some highlights included news regarding supervision, and important recognitions. The certification committee introduced a new supervisor's handbook. The handbook should be ready for distribution in the fall, and will be available in print and digital formats. During the meeting, we honoured two play therapists with awards. Lori Wareham-Mulrooney of St. John's Newfoundland and Labrador won the Monica Herbert award. Donna Starling of Fergus Ontario won the Betty Bedard-Bidwell Volunteer Award. Congratulations to Lori and Donna!

The Board Members honored retired play therapists: Carol Ahmed, Donna Cuthbertson, Kathy Eugster, Kevin Keliher, Trudy Kozak, Barbara Tredger, and Eila A Norris.

The conference provided an opportunity for the Play Therapy community to network and reconnect with each other. We were excited to be joined by many pioneers of play therapy such as Betty Bedard-Bidwell, Theresa Fraser, Nancy Reidel-Bowers, and Greg Lubimiv. The conference also featured exhibitors and sponsors from: Sandtasik, Maritime Play Therapy Centre, Changing Steps Child & Family Counselling, Ampersand Printing, The Grief and Trauma Healing Centre, Play Therapy Supply, Sand Trays Etc. and Jan Yordy. We thank them for their ongoing support of CAPT and the Annual Conference!

The Board of Directors' were presented and approved the membership for 2023-2024. Our Board Members are: Caleigh Flannigan, CPT, ON; Grant Gear, NL; Hannah Sun-Reid, CPT-S, ON; Helena Kogas, ON; Ineke Guadagnin, ON; Justine Elliot, AB; Kenda Riggs, NL; Lindsay Crowe, CPT, ON; Nicole Perryman, CPT, ON; Ricky McIntyre, CPT, NB; and Kevin St. Louis, ON.

The conference continued on the second day with two more exceptional workshops. Jan Yordy, Med, MSW, CPT, EMDR presented: "Neurobiology and Play to Support Grief Journeys: Better Understand How to Reach a Child Who is Grieving." Suzanne Trotman, RP, presented "REST in Grief: The Power of Stillness in Healing."

## The Board Members honoured newly-certified play therapists in 2022 and 2023

Congratulations to those members of CAPT that have become newly Certified in 2022:

### CPT

Katie Bauer ON  
Nathalie Brissette-Chenery SK  
Julie Casey ON  
Kristi Forbes AB  
Fatemeh Heshmati ON  
Alyson Hirtle ON  
Michelle Kwapis BC  
Mora MacDonald NB  
Cynthia Manley NS  
Ricky McIntyre NB  
Anna Raworth ON  
Kimberley Sesink AB  
Venessa Trask-Nichols NL  
Lori Wareham-Mulrooney NL  
Abigail Wideman MB

### CPT-S

Billie-Jo Bennett ON  
Rachel Tara Koblitz ON  
Stephanie Rabenstein ON  
Danny Seto ON

Congratulations to those members of CAPT that have become newly Certified to date in 2023 (as of May 5, 2023):

### CPT

Heather Becker ON  
Kristi Garrido NS  
Esther Waymouth ON  
Paula Hennessey NL

### CPT-S

Zoila Carolina Hall AB  
Anna Raworth ON

## Certification Q&A Session

October 30, 2023  
1:00 – 2:00 PM EST

Join your certification committee chair on zoom to answer any question you may have about certification. The Certification Q&A sessions are held monthly.



## Betty Bedard Bidwell Volunteer Award

Donna Starling, CPTS, ON

*Last year (2022) was the inaugural year for the CAPT Betty Bedard Bidwell Volunteer Award, recognizing outstanding volunteer contribution to CAPT and its members.*

Donna continues to be an active member of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee after her long tenure on the Board. She has been integral in making sure this committee meets regularly and accomplishes its goals. She is a caring leader and shows support for the team despite our busy schedules. She has brought forward amazing new initiatives such as the Development of a Partnership with Beausoleil First Nation in the mutual creation of Play Therapy Training for Indigenous people and groups. She has always been a positive and supportive committee member and her commitment is unwavering. One of the initiatives we are trying to support is to continue to engage Board members after their tenure so that we don't lose the institutional knowledge we have – we just transfer it to committee work. Our vision is that we have strong leadership on committees that will engage non-board members in the work, thus reducing the time commitment for Board members while still doing excellent work and outreach. Donna has continued to demonstrate a commitment to CAPT in so many ways.

*CAPT Board*

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## Monica Herbert Award

Lori Wareham Mulrooney, CPT, NL

*This award has been inspired by the courage, devotion, hard work and commitment to working with and helping children that has been demonstrated by Monica Herbert.*

*Lori Wareham is the first Newfoundland recipient of the Monica Herbert award. She received this honour at our 2023 Annual General Meeting.*

This is what some of her colleagues have shared about her:

I have worked with Lori in many capacities over the years and am pleased to be working with her once again at AMAL Wellness Centre! Lori's love for children and youth, as well as her commitment to Play Therapy is recognised throughout the therapeutic community. She has always been an advocate for the Canadian Play Therapy Association and is constantly encouraging colleagues to pursue training.

Lori has touched the lives of so many children, youth and families and we expect great things from her in the future!

*Donna Ronan MSW RSW*

I first met Lori when we were in our early 20's, working in the field of child and youth care as youth care workers. Her passion has always been to work with children and youth, and she returned to school to pursue her graduate degree to work clinically. Recognizing the value of play therapy and the need for certified play therapists in our province, Lori decided to pursue her CAPT certification, while continuing to complete many advanced certificates through CAPT over the years. She is one of the biggest advocates for CAPT, always encouraging membership and recommending play therapy education and certification to others.

Lori is one of the most hard-working dedicated play therapists in our province. She is always mentoring others and integrates this into her day-to-day work. She also believes in collaborating and working together as a team. By building other therapist competencies and capacities, the impacts of her work are far reaching with helping children, youth and families in some of the most remote rural areas of our province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Lori sees some of the most hurt children and youth in our province, and through play therapy, helps them to heal and grow. While working in the public system, she was often heard gently advocating for the needs of our most vulnerable children -who were sitting on the waitlist due to the public system flaws - advocating that they be seen quicker. Always educating Managers and Directors on trauma, impacts and the therapeutic needs for children and youth. She has since moved to working in a community organization that fully understands and supports the healing powers of play for children and youth and is often sought out for her play therapy counselling and consultation.

She did a wonderful video piece educating the public and policy makers on play therapy. She also does presentations to the community on play therapy, and professional associations. She continues to be a lifelong learner in the field.

With respect to the criteria for this award, Lori meets them all:

- Outstanding clinical work using play therapy
- Research related to play therapy through a book, article or paper (she completed a published video presentation on play therapy through the Janeway Foundation and a video NLCSW play therapy webinar)
- Committee work supporting CAPT by furthering the field of play therapy (her work with the first national and international play therapy 2023 week; history as CAPT Board Member for 6 years + Executive CAPT Board Member Secretary)
- Making exceptional contributions to the lives of children.

*Kenda Riggs*

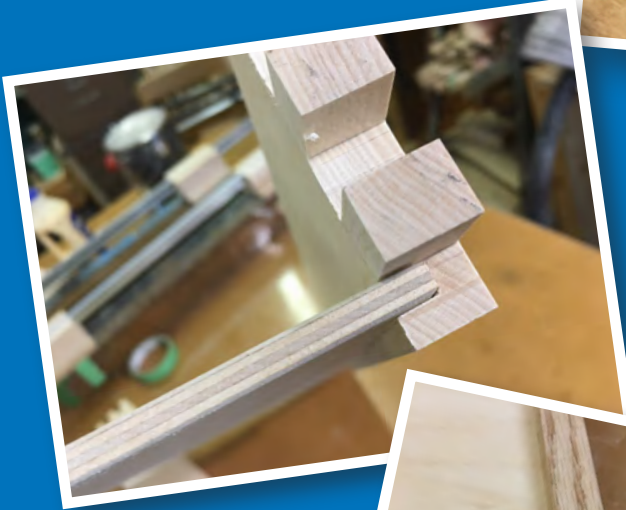


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# Healing Spaces

*Healing Spaces is an ongoing article in Playground. If you would like your therapy playroom to be featured please contact Theresa Fraser at [theresaannfraser@gmail.com](mailto:theresaannfraser@gmail.com).*

*This edition of Healing Spaces is happy to focus on Jocelyn Nand, MACP, Registered Psychologist, Executive Director at Family Counselling Centres, Edmonton, Alberta.*

Jocelyn has been practicing play therapy since 2015, when she took her first level of training with the Canadian Association for Play Therapy (CAPT). She currently works in a private practice setting at the Family Counselling Centres in Edmonton, Alberta.

Jocelyn was drawn to the field of play therapy, when she realized that traditional talk therapy was not the best fit for the majority of her clients. She recognizes that children and adolescents are unique in their strengths and struggles. In her experience, play is the most developmentally appropriate way of supporting minors. She is always amazed and honored by how her clients play and show her their stories/experiences. She is often invited into their play and gets to witness what it is like to live in their world. She finds herself grateful for how play therapy can be utilized with a diverse demographic of clients from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Play therapy offers an outlet to be her most creative self and get engaged in an integrative dance with her skills, other training modalities and the client's presenting concerns, strengths, and challenges. Jocelyn enjoys play and believes that we are deprived of play in the "adult world". She finds that all therapeutic approaches have value, however, play therapy helps her form a relationship with her clients in a non-intrusive and non-pathologizing manner. She describes that in the moment, her client's nervous system and her nervous system are in sync. She can support the client in exploring difficult experiences,

invite them to entertain a new perspective, model what it would mean to incorporate a new skill in their everyday life and all this is seamless through play.

Early on in her academic career, Jocelyn felt drawn to an existential, psychodynamic, person/child-centered orientations. These foundational approaches integrated well with attachment theory, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR), Jungian orientation and somatic processing influenced by Pat Ogden's work. Jocelyn's clinical work evolved as she worked with clients and also focused on her own personal therapeutic work.

"A depth focused therapist" is what she identifies with and further explains that while she has the resources to help clients with "symptom management", she finds greater meaning in her work when she helps clients connect with themselves differently from how they are used to and engage in a collaborative, non-judgemental and strength-focused dialogue with themselves. She works extensively with clients who present with anxiety, depression, grief/loss, trauma, self-esteem struggles and attachment issues. She finds herself getting equally frustrated and curious about the "stuck moments" in therapy. During moments like this, she asks herself if this barrier has to do with readiness, a mechanism of adaptation that is working extremely hard to protect the client, hidden or suppressed trauma, the client's disconnection from their emotions or body, etc. Hakomi



has helped her incorporate more somatic-based interventions in her practice.

One of her favorite expressive arts activities is where the client is asked to engage in a 3-part project. In the first part, they are asked to draw themselves as a tree and in the second part, they are asked to draw themselves as a tree from the perspective of others in their world. In the final part, the client is asked to draw themselves as the tree they want to be in the future. Then the client is engaged in processing questions about the activity to explore aspects like where the tree would grow, the physical attributes of the tree, whether the tree has roots, the tree's needs and wishes, etc. This activity allows her to connect with their existential side and is a great representation of how the clients see themselves and interact with others in their world and, at times, how the world is engaging back.

Jocelyn loves utilizing Ana Gomez's resources on mechanisms of adaptation or "the helpers" clients utilize. Ana uses animal analogies that work for children and adults. Jocelyn has taken extensive sandplay training and finds it a powerful modality.

Clients often tell Jocelyn that her play therapy environment and office feel calming and safe. Counseling offices are divided by an imaginary line that separates a large play area from a seating area. The colors are purposefully selected and include calming blues, blue greens, and warm brown tones. Each seating

area has decorative art depicting themes in nature. For example, some rooms have a serene beach theme while others have a forest theme, which clients find grounding. The couches and armchairs are spacious and clients can choose cushions and throws to adjust their comfort. Children have access to squishy sphere-shaped pillows in a variety of colors as well as fidget and sensory objects. In the center of the play therapy area, there is a sand tray on a rolling table with two rolling chairs. Behind the sand tray, there is a large collection of figures and symbols. The collection is hidden behind rolling shades that help keep the sensory noise from the collection at a manageable level. The rooms have a puppet theatre and a wide range of puppets, musical instruments, blocks, doll houses and accessories, baby dolls and care items, tool sets, play kitchen and food, an art easel and art and craft supplies. There are a variety of games and bibliotherapy options on a diverse range of topics as well as objects that help with somatic-based activities like resistance bands, breakable objects, etc. The rooms are both child and adult-friendly. Jocelyn reflects that she has been fortunate enough to design the office size and spaces for the majority of their offices.

"Phenomenal" is how Jocelyn describes her play therapy training with CAPT. She is appreciative of learning from a variety of different supervisors who were similar in their love for play therapy but different in their approach. She reflects that approaches, interventions, and activities



should be adapted to the client's needs and done with purposeful intent. Knowing your theoretical foundation or the theoretical house you operate from is important in guiding how you conceptualize the client and how you integrate or combine modalities. This aids your ability to feel grounded as a therapist and to recognize your roles, expectations and assumptions.

Jocelyn recommends that finding a supervisor who matches your style is important, but having an additional supervisor who practices from frameworks that you are interested in or feel drawn to, can also help with your growth as a therapist. She cautions about avoiding dual relationships in supervision, as her very first supervision experience with a play therapy supervisor was not a positive one.

She recommends that therapists engage in their own individual counseling. The transference and countertransference dynamics might be readily apparent regardless of the client's age but can be easily missed. According to Jocelyn, people often view these dynamics from a negative perspective but with awareness, attunement, and ongoing self-work, these dynamics can be a blessing.

Jocelyn's self-care has evolved over time since I first started as a therapist. She picks activities that stimulate and nurture numerous areas of wellness including physical, intellectual, spiritual, social and emotional. She attends workshops and training opportunities every year; networks with other therapists who have shared passions as well as differing ones; reads fiction books

unrelated to therapy; gardens and bakes regularly; enjoys warm baths with aromatherapy; participates in massage therapy appointments once a month; and does a fifteen-minute dance routine a minimum of three times a week. In addition, she walks with her family whenever the weather permits. She also likes to travel somewhere new every year with her family. She explains that it is both humbling and exciting to experience other cultures and different ways of life. These experiences not only bring humility but allow her to express gratitude for the things she takes for granted and birth a connection to the more positive aspects of humanity.

Jocelyn envisions having an office location that backs onto a ravine or wooded area, where she could walk through a private trail and have sessions with clients outdoors. She would like to provide clients the opportunity to work in a garden and make floral arrangements to depict their feelings in the moment. A few smaller barns to engage in art therapy activities with minimal worries about clean-up would be a wonderful addition. She would still engage in animal-assisted play therapy and would love to have more than one therapy canine. The office itself would be set up like a house, with a kitchen for clients to work with dough and bake in. She would likely run parent groups combining attachment theory, EMDR, Circle of Security Parenting and Theraplay activities. She would love to create a group that allows for hands-on activities that go beyond psycho-education. Jocelyn has many different ideas and passions in the realm of play therapy.

## *Greetings Fellow Play Therapist,*

We are writing to you as a Play Therapy advocate to invite you to become a **Charter Individual Associate Member** of the newly formed **International Consortium of Play Therapy Associations (IC-PTA)**. We seek to promote collaboration among existing national Play Therapy associations and play therapists worldwide to strengthen and further develop the field of Play Therapy. We hope that as a play therapist who is committed to the profession that you share our passion and mission to promote the value, integrity, and quality of Play Therapy practice globally.

IC-PTA's overarching goal is to **provide children in every country access to quality Play Therapy services** to increase their opportunity to reach their potential. Unfortunately, Play Therapy is not available in many countries, or when it is, often, there is a lack of Play Therapy education/training and no regulated requirements for practice.

We are reaching out to you to join us in our mission. We realize that IC-PTA has undertaken an enormous task and **we need your voice and your support to achieve our objectives**. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of children who otherwise might not receive the help they need to thrive.

We value your ideas and invite you to **be actively involved in committees or task forces** as your time and interest allows to help IC-PTA achieve the following aims (also see the IC-PTA Newsletter, No. 1, for specific task force initiatives you can join):

- **Promote connection, collaboration, and respect** among play therapists from around the globe.
- **Disseminate resources and information** on IC-PTA standards for Play Therapy training, supervision, and practice, with a goal to learn from each other and promote the development of high quality and culturally responsive practices worldwide.
- **Support the development of non-profit, member-driven national Play Therapy associations** worldwide as a foundation to developing quality Play Therapy training and practice in their respective countries

We recognize that language is a barrier to achieving meaningful international collaboration and that an initial and practical objective for IC-PTA is to increase diversity among bilingual play therapist members who can assist IC-PTA in overcoming language barriers, as well as to develop resources translated into multiple languages.

As a Charter Individual Member you will be able to connect with international play therapists and leaders in the field through such activities as: the IC-PTA annual Social Assembly, two annual transglobal Networking Events, and involvement with other members on projects of shared interest to accomplish the aims of IC-PTA.

As a Charter Member, you will be provided a special IC-PTA Charter Member Logo that can be used in your email signature line; charter membership is lifetime for members who remain in good standing with IC-PTA.

Note: Only individuals joining IC-PTA prior to Dec. 31, 2023, will hold the designation of IC-PTA Charter Member!

Charter Members are provided the additional benefit of a 1-year introductory membership fee of 25 Swiss Francs/Euro (usual fee is 50 Swiss Francs/Euro). New Charter Members introductory membership will run through Dec. 31, 2024.

**JOIN IC-PTA TODAY and attend the Social Assembly Meeting December 2, 2023, to connect with fellow play therapists across the globe and lend your voice and expertise!**

We sincerely hope that you will consider joining IC-PTA. Please share this information with like-minded colleagues.

### THE INAUGURAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Association for Play Therapy

Association for Play Therapy Italy

Australasia Pacific Play Therapy Association

British Association of Play Therapists

Canadian Association for Play Therapy

Japan Association for Play Therapy

IC-PTA is a transglobal network of national Play Therapy associations and individuals that was established legally as a non-profit international association in Switzerland in 2022. Visit [ic-pta.com](http://ic-pta.com) to view IC-PTA's mission, bylaws, history, and standards of practice.

WE ARE EXCITED TO BE SENDING OUT THE FIRST IC-PTA NEWSLETTER AND BRING YOU UP TO DATE WITH OUR PROGRESS SO FAR!

JOIN A TRANSGLOBAL NETWORK THAT VALUES, PROMOTES, DISSEMINATES, AND STRENGTHENS THE INTEGRITY AND QUALITY OF PROFESSIONAL PLAY THERAPY AND THERAPEUTIC PLAY PRACTICE

## *Background*

IC-PTA was founded in 2022 in Switzerland as a result of international collaborations focused on mutual desire and passion to support and promote integrity and quality in Play Therapy education and practice globally with the overarching goal to provide children in every country access to quality Play Therapy services ([link history](#)).

Initial efforts are focused on bringing together existing non-profit, member-driven Play Therapy associations, pooling knowledge and expertise to achieve the following objectives:

- Provide an **online intercultural space** for play therapists worldwide to connect and collaborate.
- Disseminate **resources and information on standards** for Play Therapy training, supervision, and practice, with a goal to learn from each other and promote the development of high quality and culturally responsive practices.
- Support the **development of non-profit, member-driven national Play Therapy associations** worldwide as a foundation to developing quality Play Therapy training and practice in their respective countries.

The first task was to develop the IC-PTA **Play Therapy Education Competencies and Standards of Practices** ([link standards](#)), a guide for both established and developing Play Therapy associations worldwide. IC-PTA education-based, clinical competencies are used to assess Play Therapy practice evidenced by educational experiences through university course work and/or approved training experiences. The IC-PTA Best Practice Standards guide and benchmark service delivery of Play Therapy within the clinical environment.

The initial **Board of Directors** is comprised of six non-profit, member-driven associations: the Association for Play Therapy (U.S.), Association for Play Therapy Italy, Australasia Pacific Play Therapy Association, British Association of Play Therapists, Canadian Association for Play Therapy, and Japan Association for Play Therapy ([link board of directors](#)).

## *Work in Progress*

The IC-PTA Board have been focused on building a robust organisation that will provide the structural foundation to achieve our mission and objectives. The Board is currently working on several task force projects including:

- **Developing international definitions** of Play Therapy and Therapeutic Play focused on ethical use in professional practice and distinguishing between training and delivery requirements.
- **Providing organisational support** for fledgling non-profit, member-driven national Play Therapy associations.
- **Developing guidelines** for promoting respectful and inclusive intercultural collaboration among members.
- **Identifying more diverse bilingual play therapists** to overcome language barriers to international collaborations.
- **Developing resources** (digital print and video) on various topics translated in multiple languages that target developing Play Therapy associations and play therapists in countries where Play Therapy training is lacking.
- **Developing disaster response guidelines** and consultation.

We need YOU, our members, to lend your voice and expertise in one or more of these areas to support and promote Play Therapy globally. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of children who otherwise might not have access to quality Play Therapy services and receive the help they need to thrive!

## Latest Updates

We are delighted that the Irish Association for Play Therapy and Psychotherapy (IAPTP) and the Association for Taiwan Play Therapy (ATPT) have become the 7th and 8th National Play Therapy Associations to join IC-PTA as voting Operating Members demonstrating their visionary leadership in the global field of Play Therapy ([link operating members](#)). We look forward to welcoming IAPTP and ATPT representatives to the Social Assembly gathering in December 2023.

## Social Assembly December 2, 2023, online

The Social Assembly is the supreme organ of the IC-PTA and is convened by Voting Members, who represent Operating Member Play Therapy Associations, and attended by non-voting individual Associate Members. The next Social Assembly will be held online on December 2, 2023, 10-12pm (WET). All our members are invited to attend. The Social Assembly Agenda, including a Zoom link will be sent out, along with synchronised times according to international time zones.

The Social Assembly meeting will be an opportunity for the task forces to present their long term aims and short term goals, with an invitation for YOU to become actively involved in IC-PTA projects that support international collaboration and the development of **Quality Play Therapy Education and Practice Worldwide**.

## Benefits of Membership

IC-PTA seeks to promote collaboration among existing Play Therapy associations and play therapists worldwide to strengthen and further develop the field of Play Therapy. We realize that IC-PTA has undertaken an enormous task and we need your voice, expertise, and support to achieve our objectives.

We are reaching out to play therapists who share our passion and commitment to make quality Play Therapy services available to children worldwide by joining us in **promoting the value, integrity, and quality of Play Therapy practice globally**. Unfortunately, Play Therapy is not available in many countries, or when it is, there is often a lack of quality Play Therapy education and supervision and no regulated requirements for practice.

As an Individual Member of IC-PTA you will have opportunities to be part of a global movement to make a difference in the availability of quality Play Therapy services for all children worldwide:

- You are invited to **connect with international play therapists and leaders** in the field and provide input on important issues by attending the annual Social Assembly.
- You are invited to attend and contribute to, **two transglobal Networking Events per year**. The theme of 2024 networking events will be decided at the Social Assembly, December 2, 2023, where you have an opportunity to contribute your ideas.

Become an Individual  
Charter Member by joining  
before December 31, 2023.

**JOIN NOW!**

- You are invited to **join one or more of the Task Force initiatives to share your passion and expertise**. You will collaborate with a group of international play therapists with shared interests.
- You are invited to **publish via our Blog and the newsletter**, providing opportunities for our members to initiate discussion and contribute articles that reach a global readership and further the work of IC-PTA.

Individuals that join the IC-PTA **before December 31, 2023 will be designated Charter Member status**, signifying the energy and forward-thinking vision that IC-PTA needs to achieve its potential. As a Charter Member, you will be provided a **Charter Member Logo** (see below) that can be used in your email signature line. Charter Members are provided the **additional benefit of a 1-year introductory membership fee** of 25 Swiss Francs/Euro (usual fee is 50 Swiss Francs/Euro); introductory membership will run through December 31, 2024.



IC-PTA Mission Statement: "The International Consortium of Play Therapy Associations IC-PTA is a transglobal network of legal entities and individual persons founded in 2022 in Switzerland that acts as reference body to value, promote, disseminate, and strengthen the integrity and quality in supporting professional Play Therapy and Therapeutic Play practice."



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