

Resources for Children, Parents, and Professionals:

Theraplay & Children with Autism

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Listed within this handout are resources for children, parents, and professionals on focused on using Theraplay and working with children diagnosed with Autism. Please note that the supplies listed in the children's section are for activities and games that parents and therapists could play in a Theraplay session with a child. Also, the books listed in the parents' section would also be helpful resources for professionals.

### Resources for Children:



Evangeline Munns stated that “a soft, sturdy blanket is an essential Theraplay item” since many activities can be done using it. For example, a child can be given a blanket ride when two adults hold the corners of the blanket, the child sits in the center, and the adults lift the blanket up. Another possibility is singing “Here we go ‘round the mulberry bush” and at the end of the song the participants can “pop” under the blanket. (Munns, 2000, p. 311)

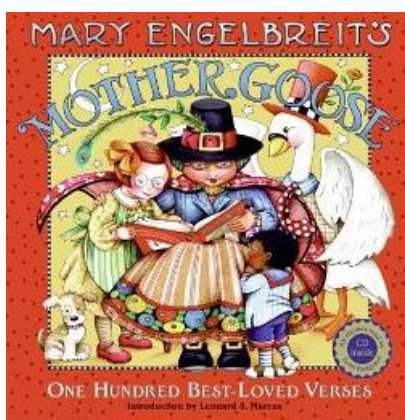
Munns, E. (2000). *Theraplay: Innovations in attachment-enhancing play therapy*. Northvale, NJ: J. Aronson.



Bubbles can be used in the Theraplay session to create opportunities for spontaneous eye contact. If the therapist holds a caught bubble on the wand in front of her face, eye contact will be made when the child pops the bubble.



Stickers can be used when playing Sticky Nose. The counselor or parent puts a sticker on his/her nose and the child takes it off. Another variation would be putting a small amount of lotion on a cotton ball and sticking the ball on your nose. The child could take it off or blow it off.



This book includes 100 nursery rhymes, as well as 1 CD that help engage children's auditory and sight. Many, if not all, of the rhymes can be used to engage a child during a session. For example, you can play row, row, row your boat on the CD player while physically acting out the game. Many of the rhymes included are fairly well known, providing a sense of familiarity and predictability for children.

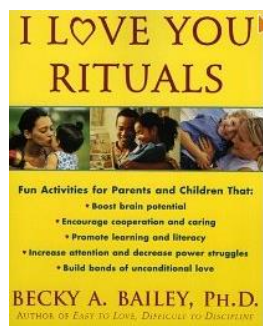
Engelbreit, M. (2005). *Mary Engelbreit's Mother Goose: One hundred best-loved verses*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.



A bag of cotton balls can have many jobs in a Theraplay room. The therapist can stick a cotton ball on her nose (by using a little lotion as "glue") and having the child blow it off. You can also play "Cotton Ball Hide" which involves hiding a cotton ball somewhere on the child and then the parent or another

available adult finds the hidden ball.

## Resources for Parents:



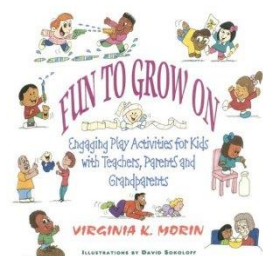
Becky Bailey has put together a collection of wonderful activities, rhymes, and games that are sure to turn into rituals in your home. The rituals are geared towards infants through children eight years old. The cover boasts that these activities have the potential to encourage cooperation and attention, as well as decrease power struggles.

Bailey, R. A. (2000). *I love you rituals*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.



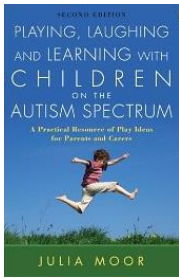
Parenting the Theraplay Way presents activities that parents can do with their children to create connections with their child, including games that can be played as a family or as a group. These games aim to encourage emotional and physical closeness between parent and child.

Christensen, G. (2013). *Parenting the Theraplay Way: Engaging, fun activities to create joyful connectedness*. Wilmette, IL: Theraplay Institute.



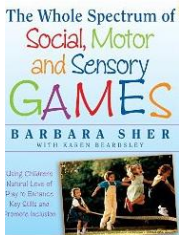
Fun to Grow On has over 100 activities that parents can do with their child. Many are simple, using household items you already have; however, the results can be large as doing the activities can help build strong relationships between parent and child.

Morin, V. K., & Sokoloff, D. (1999). *Fun to grow on: Engaging play activities for kids with teachers, parents, and grandparents*. Chicago, IL: Magnolia Street.



Through the author's own experiences and readings, she decided to write a book that she wish had been available when she first heard the diagnosis. In this book she shares ideas to engage, but also tries to help you understand your child. Each chapter focuses on a "type" of play. Some potential problems for children with Autism with the specific type of play are highlighted and then she gives possible solutions to make that type of play easier.

Moor, J. (2008). *Playing, laughing and learning with children on the autism spectrum: A practical resource of play ideas for parents and carers*. London: Jessica Kingsley.



Sher's book presents dozens of activities and games that parents can use at home to help carry over what was learned during Theraplay sessions. The author does a nice job giving modifications to the activities presented, making the games adaptable for children of different abilities.

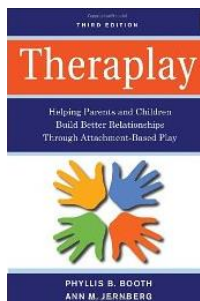
Sher, B., & Butler, R. (2009). *Early intervention games: Fun, joyful ways to develop social and motor skills in children with autism spectrum or sensory processing disorders*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.



The Theraplay Institute's website can be helpful for parents to decide if Theraplay is the right choice for your family. The parent site answers the question, "What is Theraplay?" and explains what the typical treatment protocol looks like.

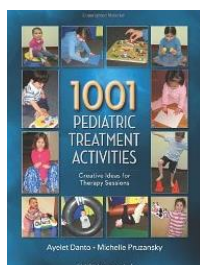
The Theraplay Institute. (n.d.). *For Parents*. Retrieved June 1, 2013, from <http://theraplay.org/index.php/for-parents>

## Resources for Professionals:



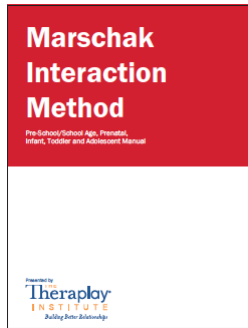
Theraplay, a groundbreaking approach to integrating attachment theory into counseling practice, is in its 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. This book gives an overview of the Theraplay method, strategies for using Theraplay, and specific applications of Theraplay, including an entire chapter devoted to Theraplay for children with Autism and other Pervasive Developmental Disorders.

Booth, P. B., & Jernberg, A. M. (2010). *Theraplay: Helping parents and children build better relationships through attachment-based play* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.



Although this guide is written for OT & PTs working with children, many of the activities included in this manual can be used in the Theraplay room. Activities presented in this book can easily fit into the four dimensions of Theraplay.

Danto, A., & Pruzansky, M. (2011). *1001 pediatric treatment activities: Creative ideas for therapy sessions*. Thorofare, NJ: SLACK.



This set includes both the manual and cards needed to complete the Marschak Interaction Method (MIM) with a family. The MIM is conducted by families completed 8-10 tasks chosen by the counselor. The therapist then assesses the quality and nature of the parent-child relationship.

*Marschak Interaction Method Manual and Card Set: Includes Tasks for Pre-Natal, Infant, Toddler, Pre-School/School Age and Adolescent Versions.* (2011). Chicago, IL: Theraplay Institute.

#### A Practical Approach to Implementing Theraplay for Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Theraplay is a counseling approach that uses elements of play therapy to help children build secure attachment relationships with others through attachment-based play. This article describes a practical approach for implementing Group Theraplay with children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), particularly those that are mainstreamed in a kindergarten classroom setting. The approach and resources that are available in place in school settings, such as mental health professionals (e.g., school counselor, social worker, etc.) and teachers. Foundational Theraplay assumptions, therapeutic goals, empirical support, and implementation guidelines are provided. Comparative effectiveness research examining the use of Group Theraplay with this population in this setting versus the use of alternative therapeutic approaches is presented. To help guide future research in this needed area of outcomes investigation, several discussion questions appropriate for clinical research in this population are suggested. Ethical and cultural implications pertinent to the application of Group Theraplay for children with ASD also are discussed.

Keywords: theraplay, autism spectrum disorder, counselor, mental health professional, mainstream classroom

Theraplay is a form of therapy that uses elements of play therapy to assist children in forming secure attachment relationships with others. Theraplay was originally developed by Dr. Ann Jernberg and her colleagues through their work with Head Start preschoolers in the late 1960s (Jernberg & Booth, 1999). Jernberg has noted that her work was heavily influenced by Ainslie DeLoe's research on children with autism, particularly as it relates to therapeutic strategies associated with improved communication among children with autism (DeLoe, Laurent & Carlson, 1989). At the outset of her work, Jernberg studied early infant attachment and identified the importance of physical contact in helping children increase self-regulation, particularly emotional regulation (Myrow, 2006). Consistent with attachment theory, the early attachment between a child and primary caregiver has

Rachel Simeone-Russell published an article in 2011 that focused on using Theraplay with children who have Autism. In the article, Simeone-Russell outlines past research, as well as advocating the need for research to be done using Theraplay in schools. Within the article, the author also highlights the benefits that Theraplay can have

for children who have been diagnosed with Autism.

Simeone-Russell, R. (2011). A Practical Approach to Implementing Theraplay for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 20(4), 224-235. Retrieved June 1, 2013.



- This is a set of 3 DVDs, approximately 4 hours long, was shot at a live Theraplay training. Topics covered include: An overview of Theraplay, typical family treatment protocol, explanation of the 4 Theraplay dimensions and core concepts, current Theraplay research, explanation of the Marschak Interaction Method, examples of activates, suggestions on working with parents, and how to adapt Theraplay for Trauma.

The Theraplay Institute (Producer). (2009). *An Introduction to Theraplay, 3-DVD Set*[Motion picture on DVD]. USA.



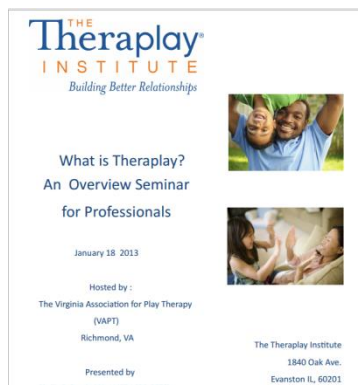
The Theraplay Institute website for professionals gives an excellent explanation of Theraplay, as well as future trainings and information about research completed that evaluated the effectiveness of Theraplay. The site also has a link to Theraplay books and DVD's

available for purchase.

The Theraplay Institute. (n.d.). *For Therapists*. Retrieved June 1, 2013, from

<http://theraplay.org/index.php/for-therapists>





This online resource gives an overview of Theraplay and information on using it with different situations, such as in groups or with families. The author also included information on using Theraplay with specific populations, including children with Autism or children who have gone through a trauma.

The Theraplay Institute. (n.d.). *What is Theraplay? An overview seminar for professionals.*

Retrieved June 3, 2013, from

<http://vapt.cisat.jmu.edu/winterconference13/VAPT%20January%2018,%202013.pdf>



This video gives an overview of what Autism is and how it can affect people in a variety of ways. It focuses on 4 children with Autism. This video acknowledges the difficulties, but also highlights many positives of having Autism. It also informs the audience of several interesting statistics on Autism.

Autism & Me. (n.d.). *Autism & Me, Presented by Rosie King.* Retrieved June 4, 2013, from

<http://www.wimp.com/explainsautism/>