



# PLAY THERAPY NEWS

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## Filial Therapy

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The word *filial* comes from the Latin term for "parent-child." Filial Therapy is a way to treat troubled children where the parent is used as a partner in the child's therapy. With this method, the parent becomes the child's primary therapeutic agent (Guerney, et.al 1999; Landreth, 2000; VanFleet, 2000). Parental involvement in a child's developmental process facilitates interpersonal relationships, which may be a source of maladjustment. It teaches the

parent a new way of interacting with their child. Also, Filial Therapy provides focused attention to the child from a person who holds emotional significance for them. This method encourages learned parental anxieties to become unlearned and provides opportunities for miscommunication to be clarified to the child by the parent. By teaching parents how to use the therapeutic powers of play, the communication gap between parent and child can be closed.



Effective communication is the key to healthy parent-child relationships. Good family interactive patterns begin in early childhood. Since young children lack the capacity for meaningful verbalization of their thoughts, feelings and concerns, play provides kids with a concrete means of expression.

Parents playing with their children will give them tools to better understand their child's world. This allows the child to feel safe, understood, accepted, valued, encouraged, empowered and capable.

### Filial Therapy Research

The Filial Therapy method has been well-researched with diverse populations and settings. A recent meta-analysis of Filial Therapy studies confirmed the efficacy of this intervention by revealing a large effect of 1.15 for studies involving parents (Bratton, Ray, Rhine & Jones, 2005). Significant findings show:

- Children's problem behaviors reduced
- parents gained greater empathy, acceptance and understanding of their children
- parents' stress levels associated with child rearing declined
- Families required less involvement with the mental health system

## Benefits of Filial Therapy

*There are many advantages to parents engaged in play sessions:*

- Parents already have a natural relationship with their kids; they are the experts on their children and in a more familiar position than a therapist
- Learning to conduct play sessions is within the capability of most parents
- Therapeutic change is usually constructive and long-term with parental involvement in play sessions

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Children and Families through  
the Power of Play



## Spring has Sprung!



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- The benefit of Filial Therapy is that the parents will learn to better understand and respond appropriately to their child through the play, which makes decisions in raising the child easier for years to come
- Not only does the parent-child relationship improve, all family members will benefit
- The play sessions learned in the therapist's office can ultimately be used at home, reducing the number of sessions required
- Parents report that their efforts and commitment in learning family play therapy was worth the encouraging end-results
- Filial Therapy can be used as a preventative treatment, as well as an intervention
- This approach acknowledges that learning, growth and lasting change stem from within the child. It teaches parents to nurture an internal locus of control in the child, fostering creativity, self-direction,

self-responsibility and self-control

- Children's problematic behaviors influenced by parental attitudes can be worked through under similar conditions providing an opportunity to intervene into family dynamics
- The method empowers parents to help children; thereby avoiding the potential guilt and helplessness parents develop when dependent on a therapist for problem resolution

### If I Had My Child to Raise Over Again

I'd finger-paint more and point the finger less  
I'd do less correcting and more connecting  
I'd take my eyes off my watch, and watch with my eyes  
I'd care to know less and know to care more  
I'd take more hikes and fly more kites  
I'd stop playing serious, and seriously play  
I'd do more hugging and less tugging  
I'd be firm less often, and affirm much more  
I'd build self-esteem first, and the house later  
I'd teach less about the love of power...and more about  
the power of love

- Diane Loomans