Which change drivers might rock the play therapy world? APT mines recent mental health intelligence (i.e. publications) and disseminates quarterly Mining Reports with cutting-edge trends, emerging wisdom, and other information to play therapy practitioners, instructors, and supervisors. Consult the publications or links displayed for answers to the questions.

Intelligence

What is the mental health status of the parents of court-involved adolescents?

“Youth involved in the juvenile justice system are at risk for emotional and behavioral problems. However, research with court-involved adolescents has neglected to examine the mental health of their parents, who may also have significant personal and parenting stress” (Brown, Tarantino, Tolou-Shams, Esposito-Smythers, Healy, & Craker, 2018, p. 843).

- Revealed 35% of 144 parents of court-involved adolescents were experiencing significant mental health symptoms.
- Compared to those without significant symptoms, parents with the symptoms were prone to experiencing greater parenting stress.
- Suggested these parents were also prone to receiving prior mental health treatments and psychiatric diagnoses.


Contributor: Yih-Jiun Shen, DEd, NCC, CSC, Edinburg, TX

How might school-based mental health providers best support preschool-age children (ages 3-5) who have experienced the death of a family member?

“The majority of the interventions, regardless of their therapeutic orientation, included psychoeducation and parent/family components (e.g., companion parent group, filial therapy, parent–child joint session, etc.). They often focused on helping children and their parents normalize grief experiences, express grief and loss, develop coping skills, and facilitate adaptive communication and parent–child relationship” (Chen & Panebianco, 2018, p. 167).

- Play-based interventions were the most commonly used interventions for grief/bereavement interventions with young children in the studies selected for this review.
- The inclusion of parents and other surviving members of the family in therapy process was seen as one of the “critical ingredients” (p. 169) in providing effective support for bereaved young children.
- School-based mental health professionals can be important connections with bereaved parents, particularly in providing psychoeducation about children’s grief.


Contributor: Laura Tejada, PhD, LMFT, LCPC, RPT-S, Chicago, IL

How might the One Session Treatment for specific phobias be modified for use with young children?

“...play modified one-session of intensive cognitive-behavioural therapy (OST plus Play) ... was followed by brief telephone delivered maintenance calls over the 3 weeks immediately following treatment.” (Farrell, Kershaw, & Ollendick, 2018, p.317).

- 4 children aged 4 years old were included in this multiple series case study
- Significant improvements were achieved post treatment and on long term follow up using the intensive OST plus Play intervention.
What are children’s concepts of childhood and adolescent depression?

“Children from the age of 8–9 years demonstrate detailed concepts of depression. However, mental health educational interventions are needed to target specific gaps and misconceptions in children's understanding.” (Georgakakou-Koutsonikou, Taylor, & Williams, 2018, p. 1).

- Researchers conducted qualitative interviews (N=105) with children 8-9 and 11-12-years-old.
- Researchers cited participants’ perceptions that causal factors of mental illness were environmental and interpersonal.
- Researchers also indicated that participants perceived mental illness to be curable, with negative outcomes if left untreated.


Contributor: Elizabeth Burgin, MA, NCC, LPC Intern, Denton, TX

What are the concerns and needs of widowed fathers raising children?

“It is incumbent upon social workers, counselors, and other professionals who work with families of parentally bereaved children to help educate the surviving spouse about research findings that will help them and their children through the course of grieving” (McClatchey, 2018, p. 323).

- Provided statistics of widowed fathers caring for their child(ren) after the loss of the mother.
- Discusses reasons for the gap in literature regarding widowed fathers.
- Identifies general resources for widowed fathers.


Contributor: Kenisha Gordon, PhD, NCC, LPC-S, ACS, RPT-S, Clinton, MS

What is equine facilitated therapy and its development?

“Despite recent growth in the use of equine facilitated therapy (EFT), and its potential to be an effective alternative to traditional therapeutic interventions, the literature has not yet provided a convincing explanatory account of the practices implemented within EFT” (McNamara, 2017, p. 412).

- Involved horses as means of projection and facilitation of clients’ emotional processing.
- Reported variations exist among the implementations of practitioners’ clinical practices.
- Revealed a lack of parental involvement in therapy for children and adolescents.
- Suggested an absence of theoretical underpinning and of adequate research into perceived change mechanisms driving EFT.


Contributor: Yih-Jiun Shen, DEd, NCC, CSC, Edinburg, TX

What are the predictors of child mental health conditions?

“Research suggests that minority children with one mental health condition are more likely than White children to have a secondary mental health condition. However, there are no current studies that test the interaction between race and family resources to examine this apparent racial difference in mental health conditions in children.” (Nguyen, et al., 2018, p.1).

- Researchers collected data (N=69,029) from families with children between 2-17-years-old.
- Researchers determined that children in resource-poor families experience higher rates of mental health conditions.

**Contributor:** Elizabeth Burgin, MA, NCC, LPC Intern, Denton, TX

**Does filial therapy help adoptive families?**

“This randomized controlled replication study examined the effectiveness of child parent relationship therapy (CPRT) with 49 adoptive families. Statistically significant improvement and large treatment effects of child behavioral problems, parent-child relationship stress, and parent’s empathetic interactions with their children indicated the effectiveness of CPRT over treatment as usual” (Opiola, & Bratton 2018, p.155).

- Found a positive reaction in child-behavioral problems of adoptive children as a result of a caregiver attending child-parent relationship training (CPRT), a model of filial therapy.
- Provided evidence of the effectiveness of CPRT in diminishing the overall stress of adoptive caregivers. The authors also discussed the importance of how decreased caregiver stress positively impacts the child.
- Discussed the impact CPRT may have with adoptive families. The authors also included a rational as to why the CPRT treatment may be a good fit for this population (small group, focus on attachment, and supervised experience).


**Contributor Pedro J. Blanco, PhD, LPC-S, RPT-S, CHST Denton, TX.**

**What are some experiences of play therapists working with children diagnosed with Autism?**

“The study used a phenomenological design to explore the experiences of play therapists utilizing CCPT with children diagnosed with autism” (Overley, et al., 2018, p. 14).

- Discussed challenges of working with children diagnosed with autism.
- Examined 10 interviews from play therapists for themes and subthemes.


**Contributor: Vanessa Gaona, MEd, NCC, LPC-S, RPT-S, Sugar Land, TX**

**How might child, individual, and family clinicians work more effectively with step-families?**

“Stepfamilies can be healthy, happy families. However, effective clinical work requires a solid understanding of the normal challenges created by this very different family structure, a firm enough grasp of step dynamics to see the systemic context of any complaint, and some knowledge of “best practices” at the psychoeducational, interpersonal, and intrapsychic levels” (Papernow, 2018, p. 46).

- The author presents best practices for systemic, relational therapy with step-families, advocating for work with parent/child and the stepcouple relationships to strength attachment bonds.
- The author provides a framework for structuring therapy with individual family members, parental and couple subsystems, and parent/child subsystems, with an emphasis on highlighting the attachment process.


**Contributor: Laura Tejada, PhD, LMFT, LCPC, RPT-S, Chicago,IL**

**Does aggressive play predict future rule breaking behavior?**

“The act of pretending to be aggressive in childhood ...plays little role in predicting later criminality after other factors, such as gender, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or depression, have been taken into account.” (Smith, Ferguson, & Beaver, 2018, p. 2).

- Researchers examined correlation between use of weapons in play and later juvenile crime.
- Researchers examined moderating effects of depression and attention problems on later crime behaviors.
- Playing with toy weapons and engaging in “war play” does not seem to be a significant predictor of future crime, and it seems to be a part of natural human development.

**Contributor: Stephanie Pratola, PhD, LCP, RPT-S, Roanoke, VA**

**What makes parent consultations effective?**
“This article provides a suggested model for child-centered play therapy (CCPT) parent consultation to be used in training and research as a complement to the CCPT manual by Ray (2011). The article encompasses various aspects that are important in effectively conducting CCPT parent consultation” (Stulmaker & Jayne, 2018 p.3).
- Authors provide a detailed discussion over the purpose and the theoretical rational for providing effective parent consults.
- Authors discussed the goals of effective parent consults, the role the counsellor takes, and the typical structure for parent consults.
- Lastly, several case examples are provided of differing levels/situations (initial consult, termination consult, etc.)


**Contributor: Pedro J. Blanco, PhD, LPC-S, RPT-S, CHST Denton, TX.**

**In what ways do play therapists benefit from peer feedback in a play therapy course?**
“The researcher explored the integration of a peer feedback model that involved live observation and peer feedback sessions” (Swank, 2018, p. 25).
- Provided a discussion of themes and subthemes.
- Discussed the benefits and challenges of peer feedback.


**Contributor: Vanessa Gaona, MEd, NCC, LPC-S, RPT-S, Sugar Land, TX**

**How might therapists integrate play therapy and family therapy to address the needs of children diagnosed with ADHD and/or ODD, and who are coping with other chronic stressors?**
“The overarching goal of increased adaptive functioning of child clients can be served through a multipronged approach undergirded by the consistent love of a concerned caregiver, regardless of the chaos in a client’s life, so long as the child is protected from physical harm and exposure to violence or other behavior inappropriate for children to witness. With regard to shelter from harm, the child therapy office serves as a place for insight and instruction to aid in this endeavor” (Wofford & Ohrt, 2018, p. 109).
- The impact of poverty, particularly rural poverty, on children and families is examined in the light of the increased likelihood of rural children living in poverty to be diagnosed with ADHD than urban children.
- Best practices for integrating play therapy and Structural Family Therapy with behavioral therapy for children with ADHD, with or without comorbid ODD, are provided, with special attention given to the children living in the custody of elderly primary caregivers and/or in rural areas.


**Contributor: Laura Tejada, PhD, LMFT, LCPC, RPT-S, Chicago, IL**

**How have courtroom practices changed as it relates to questioning children in child abuse cases?**
“When children are asked questions that they don’t comprehend, their accuracy suffers.” (Zajac, Westera, & Kaladelfos, 2018, p. 187)
- Illustrates the impact of cross-examinations on young children.
- Examines and acknowledges reforms implemented to reduces stress of providing testimony and increase accuracy of information provided.
- Discusses the importance of legal training programs to address age-appropriate questioning to children.

Contributor: Kenisha Gordon, PhD, NCC, LPC-S, ACS, RPT-S, Clinton, MS

Authors

Clinical Editor: Ryan Holliman, PhD, LPC-S, RPT-S, Assistant Professor, Texas Women’s University, Dallas, TX, ryanholliman@gmail.com.

Publisher: CEO Kathryn Lebby, CAE, CMP, Association for Play Therapy, Clovis, CA, klebby@a4pt.org

Contributors:
- Pedro J. Blanco, PhD, LPC-S, RPT-S, CHST, Denton, TX
- Elizabeth Burgin, MA, NCC, LPC Intern, Denton, TX
- Vanessa Gaona, MEd, NCC, LPC-S, RPT-S, Sugar Land, TX
- Kenisha Gordon, PhD, NCC, LPC-S, ACS, RPT-S, Clinton, MS
- Stephanie Pratola, PhD, LCP, RPT-S, Roanoke, VA
- Yih-Jiun Shen, DEd, NCC, CSC, Edinburg, TX
- Laura Tejada, PhD, LMFT, LCPC, RPT-S, Chicago, IL

Reader feedback regarding how these Mining Reports might be improved and made more helpful for play therapy practitioners, instructors, and supervisors is welcomed. Mining Reports are archived in the Members Only section of the APT website (www.a4pt.org).