



November 2024 Mining Report

APT Publications

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

1. How might family participatory clown therapy help children receiving medical infusions?

“Clown therapy is the application of clowning techniques derived from the circus to medical situations. It is a non-pharmacological intervention based on positive psychological such as humor, using comical clown figures, exaggerated character movements, and various behavioral techniques to induce positive emotions in patients and promote their recovery” (Chen et al., 2024, p. 2).

- Examined 104 hospitalized children (ages 3–6) in China (52 with clown therapy; 52 without).
- Used clown nurses, cartoon stickers, and an animated hospital-themed video during clown therapy.
- Found clown therapy: reduced children’s pain, anxiety, fear, and crying; increased venipuncture compliance and parental satisfaction.

Chen, T., Chen, Q., Lin, Z., & Ye, J. (2024). Family participatory clown therapy in venipuncture in hospitalized children: A non-randomized controlled trial. *PLOS One*, 19(7), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0305101>

Contributor: Elizabeth Wine, LSCSW, RPT-S™, Wichita, KS

2. How may household characteristics predict emotion regulation (ER) among infants/toddlers?

“The high levels of social support reported by the mothers may have buffered against the effects of parenting stress on child ER” (Heeman et al., 2024, p. 407).

- Investigated predictors of emotion regulation through 118 Swedish mothers of children 10–18 months (47% girls).
- Discussed potential impact of household chaos, social support, parenting stress, and maternal sensitivity.
- Explained how maternal sensitivity and household chaos may uniquely contribute to infant/toddler emotion regulation.

Heeman, E. J., Forslund, T., Frick, M. A., Frick, A., Jónsdóttir, L. K., & Brocki, K. C. (2024). Predicting emotion regulation in typically developing toddlers: Insights into the joint and unique influences of various contextual predictors. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 48(5), 398–410. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01650254241239956>

Contributor: Alyssa Swan, PhD, LCPC, NCC, RPT™, Bloomington, IL

3. How are children’s emotional difficulties related to parent-child closeness?

“Overall, the results suggest that early and middle childhood are critical stages for improving parent-child relationships and reducing children’s emotional difficulties. Developing close parent-child relationships in childhood appears to be a key factor in reducing children’s subsequent emotional difficulties” (Katsantonis et al., 2024, p. 1).

- Analyzed 7,507 Irish children aged 3–9 through the statistics method of Bayesian structural equation modeling.
- Showed these children’s emotional difficulties and parent-child closeness were strongly and negatively correlated.
- Found children’s earlier emotional difficulties may predict later parent-child closeness and vice versa between ages 3–7.

Katsantonis, I. G., Symonds, J. E., & McLellan, R. (2024). Longitudinal relations between child emotional difficulties and parent-child closeness: A stability and malleability analysis using the STARTS model. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 18(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-024-00777-1>

Contributors: Kimberly Autrey, PhD, LMHC, NCC, RPT™, Shoreline, WA

4. What can parents and communities do to support adolescents who have experienced a recent trauma?

"Parents described a high sense of emotional burden along with worries about the future: 'I feel sad, irritable, angry as to why this has happened to my child'" (Kerbage et al., 2024, p. 7).

- Interviewed 34 parents of adolescents in France after their exposure to potentially traumatic events.
- Conceptualized an intervention model to improve parental responses.
- Emphasized the importance of individual, family, and community resilience, and helping parents prioritize child-parent relationships.

Kerbage, H., Elbejjani, M., El-Hage, W., & Purper-Ouakil, D. (2024). 'Life should go on': A qualitative inquiry of parental reactions, experiences, and perceived needs following adolescents' recent traumatic exposure. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 15(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20008066.2023.2299660>

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

5. How well do we care for the emotional needs of siblings of children who have a life-threatening illness or a condition that limits full functioning?

"Sometimes, when he has seizures, I get scared. It is like he gets lightning and thunder in his head. And then he lies completely still without blinking. Then I feel sad. I do not like when he has seizures' (sibling 3, age 8). Hardly ever did the younger siblings describe traumatic situations as extraordinary; they were more often described as a part of their normal life" (Kittelsen et al., 2024, p. 6).

- Described challenges and needs of children with life-threatening or life-limiting conditions.
- Identified, through a qualitative approach, siblings' experiences: living with heavy strains, feeling disregarded, and having personal needs.
- Suggested families and professionals offering possible outlets for siblings to communicate their needs.

Kittelsen, T. B., Castor, C., Lee, A., Kvarme, L. G., & Winger, A. (2024). "What about me?": Lived experiences of siblings living with a brother or sister with a life-threatening or life-limiting condition. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 19(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482631.2024.2321645>

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

6. How is maternal employment related to mental health of children 0–7?

"Longer employment duration was related to less (internalizing) behavior problems and more prosocial behavior but also more externalizing behavior problems" (Kopp et al., 2024, p. 3025).

- Applied meta-analyses and narrative syntheses on studies (29 and 46, respectively) published between 2005–2020.
- Concluded child mental health may benefit from mothers' working parttime, employment duration/stability, and one-year maternity leave.

Kopp, M., Lindauer, M., & Garthus-Niegel, S. (2024). Association between maternal employment and the child's mental health: A systematic review with meta-analysis. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 33(9), 3025–3042. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-023-02164-1>

Contributor: Elizabeth R. Taylor, LPC-S, LMFT, RPT-S™, Fort Worth, TX

7. Does sensory responsiveness predict an autistic child's pretend play development?

"The verified role of the level of hyporesponsiveness to sensory stimuli in the development of pretend play in children on the autism spectrum may have implications for the practice of rehabilitation of this group of children" (Krzysztofik, 2024, p. 7).

- Studied 63 autistic children aged 3–9 in Poland.
- Concluded that hyporesponsiveness is a key factor in measuring play development in children with autism.

Krzysztofik K. (2024). Does a high threshold of sensory responsiveness affect the development of pretend play in children on the autism spectrum? *Journal of Neurodevelopmental Disorders*, 16(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s11689-024-09551-y>

Contributor: Cary M. Hamilton, MA, LMHC-S, RPT-S™, CMHS, CDWF, Olympia, WA

8. How do play therapists support children during the aftermath of natural disasters?

“Play therapists must be mindful of the different phases of natural disaster response and how their role may vary across these phases. In the early stages post-disaster, a play therapist may be involved in psychoeducation, facilitating therapeutic play and community involvement. More formal clinical play therapy interventions that focus on the individual child or family are better suited to the latter stages of disaster response” (Nilsson et al., 2024, p. 1).

- Reviewed 25 studies and synthesized the roles of play therapists across various phases of natural disasters.
- Stated play therapy is beneficial during post-impact phase for some children but later phases for others.
- Called for further research examining play therapy effectiveness and play behaviors/themes among children after disasters.

Nilsson, N., Hadiprodjo, N., & Parson, J. (2024). The role of the play therapist in supporting children and families following a natural disaster: A scoping review. *Australian Journal of Rural Health*, 32(5), 877–889.
<http://doi.org/10.1111/ajr.13186>

Contributor: Caitlin Frawley, PhD, LMHC, Orlando, FL

9. What can we learn from a child’s heart rate changes—psychophysiological responses—during child-centered play therapy?

“The established relationship between high ACE [adverse childhood experience] scores and physiological hyperarousal due to emotional dysregulation is clear in the literature. . . . This study measured the heart rate of a child who had experienced multiple ACEs, during 16 child-centered play therapy (CCPT) sessions” (Perryman et al., 2024, p. 1).

- Examined rate shifts during CCPT sessions with one 5-year-old child exposed to multiple ACEs.
- Discussed previous research findings regarding low heart rate variability during sessions with aggressive play behaviors.
- Provided insights into observed heart rate dynamics with the child's identifiable episodes during CCPT sessions.

Perryman, K. L., Robinson, S., Schoonover, T. J., & Conroy, J. (2024). Psychophysiological insights into child-centered play therapy for trauma: A case study. *Trauma Care*, 4(3), 208–218.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/traumacare4030019>

Contributor: Caitlin Frawley, PhD, LMHC, Orlando, FL

10. How might Social Communication Disorder Screener (SCDS) assist clinicians with differential diagnosis?

“The separation of the criteria allows clinicians to better understand their client’s specific constellation of symptoms, which increases specificity in treatment recommendations” (Pichardo et al., 2024, p.3421).

- Developed SCDS, in relation to DSM-5 diagnostic criteria, to assess verbal, non-verbal, and functional communication of schoolchildren.
- Sampled 500 parents (of children 5-18) closely matching with the population stratification of 2020 U.S. census.
- Concluded that the factor structure reveals SCDS may become a treatment-sensitive and valid outcome measure.

Pichardo, J. M., Foley-Nicpon, M., Fields, D., & Hong, J. E. (2024). Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Social Communication Disorder Screener. *Journal of Autism & Developmental Disorders*, 54(9), 3412–3422.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-023-06076-6>

Contributor: Elizabeth Wine, LCSW, RPT-S™, Wichita, KS

11. How do children, adolescents, and adults describe themselves in Estonia?

“Knowing which attributes are most important for self-definition for people in a particular age group helps to better promote their self-esteem and general self-worth” (Tamm et al., 2024, p. 440).

- Surveyed 822 participants: 530 aged 9–19 (girls >50%); 292 aged 20–71 (women > 80%).
- Discussed the similarities and differences in personal attributes reported among different age groups.
- Revealed description tendency: early adolescents tend to be concrete, objective; late adolescents, abstract psychological; adults, social psychological.

Tamm, A., Tōugu, P., & Tulviste, T. (2024). Self-concept at different stages of life: How do early and late adolescents and young, middle-aged, and older adults describe themselves? *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 48(5), 434-441. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01650254241254103>

Contributor: Alyssa Swan, PhD, LCPC, NCC, RPT™, Bloomington, IL

12. How effective are interventions in addressing mental health of those in foster, kinship, and residential care?

"The purpose of this review and meta-analysis was to: Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions evaluated via randomized controlled trials (RCTs) for improving mental health and wellbeing outcomes for care experienced children and young people" (Trubey et al, 2024, 2830).

- Implemented meta-analyses on 44 randomized controlled studies, out of 16 databases and 22 websites, between 1990–2022.
- Found a small, short-term, but not long-term (>6 months), effectiveness.
- Suggested broadening intervention scopes, addressing systems leading to long-term change, and enhancing outcome-evaluation methodology.

Trubey, R., Evans, R., McDonald, S., Noyes, J., Robling, M., Willis, S., Boffey, M., Wooders, C., Vinnicombe, S., & Melendez-Torres, G. J. (2024). Effectiveness of mental health and wellbeing interventions for children and young people in foster, kinship, and residential care: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 25(4), 2829–2844. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1177/15248380241227987>

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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).