



May 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. Can play therapy be used to promote school-based health care service in an American Indian Reservation?

"The purpose of the Teddy Bear Clinic was to establish relationships among non-Native student nurses and Native American children and their community on a Northern Plains Indian Reservation" (Alexander-Ruff et al., 2024, p. 97).

- Embedded play therapy—granting K-3 graders the means of self-expression—in the nursing process.
- Introduced Teddy Bear Clinic as a week-long cultural immersion service-learning experience for university nursing students.
- Reviewed potential benefits for school/student nurses to reduce children's fears during health service.

Alexander-Ruff, J. H., Ruff, S. A., Roper, C., & Wilz, A. (2024). The Teddy Bear Clinic: Engaging school-aged children in health education. *NASN School Nurse*, 39(2), 97–103. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1942602X231184574>

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

2. What are the mental health and support needs of bereaved military family members?

"We report the findings of a needs assessment conducted at a nonprofit organization serving bereaved military families, inclusive of 64 families, with adolescent children ($M = 15.04$ years, $SD = 5.01$), who experienced service member loss" (Burgin et al., 2024, p. 37).

- Found most surviving family members demonstrated mild, depressive and anxiety symptoms when seeking mental health services.
- Reported family members presented higher levels of complicated grief symptoms than previous investigations.
- Noticed parents with complicated grief demonstrated higher parenting stress levels than previous study samples.

Burgin, E. E., Prosek, E. A., Shin, K., Cunningham, V. L., & Ponder, W. N. (2024). Needs assessment of surviving military families: Clinical symptoms and the parent-child relationship. *Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation*, 15(1), 37–50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21501378.2023.2257236>

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

3. How effective is child-centered play therapy (CCPT) for autistic children, as reflected by brain activity?

"Research into the effects of child-centered play therapy (CCPT) consistently highlights its positive impact on autistic children. However, its effectiveness at the neural level is underexplored. To address this research gap, the present study investigates the influence of CCPT interventions on autistic children, specifically focusing on measurable changes in brain activity through electroencephalography (EEG) alpha power analysis" (Chan & Ouyang, 2024, p. 1).

- Studied autistic children (34 in experimental; 31 in waitlist group) on neural and social behavioral outcomes
- Reported CCPT interventions increased children's EEG alpha amplitude (relaxation, reduced anxiety, social skills) and positive behavioral changes.

Clan, K. L. R., & Ouyang, G. (2024). Impact of child-centered play therapy intervention on children with autism reflected by brain EEG activity: A randomized controlled trial. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 112, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2024.102336>

Contributors: Alyssa M. Swan, PhD, LCPC, NCC, RPT™, Bloomington, IL
Rebekah Byrd, PhD, LPC (TN), LCMHC (NC), NCC, ACS, RPT-S™, Marshall, NC

4. Are arts and creativity interventions (ACIs) cost-effective for enhancing older adults' health and well-being?

"This systematic review found that participation in group-based arts and creativity programs was generally cost-effective and/or produced a positive return on investments while having a positive impact on older people's physical, psychological, and social health and wellbeing outcomes" (Crealey et al., 2023, p. 9).

- Identified six studies (out of 113 reports) meeting review criteria.
- Reviewed dancing, singing, drama, theater, visual, and creative arts being used in professionally guided programs.
- Concluded ACIs positively impacted physical, social, and psychological health and well-being.

Creakey, G., McQuade, L., O'Sullivan, R., & O'Neill, C. (2023). Arts and creativity interventions for improving health and wellbeing in older adults: A systematic literature review of economic evaluation studies. *BMC Public Health*, 23, 1–12. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-17369-x>

Contributor: Athena A. Drewes, PsyD, MA, MS Ed, RPT-S™, Ocala, FL

5. How do sociocultural pressures influence adolescent girls' communication about their bodies?

"Results provide insight into the social context in which sociocultural norms of weight stigma, body dissatisfaction, and eating related psychopathology may be reinforced" (Darling et al., 2024, p. 487).

- Examined qualitatively how body talk co-ruminated amongst 23 dyads of female teens.
- Pointed out the limitation of racial diversity within the participant pool.
- Encouraged the development of specific interventions decreasing negative views of self and others.

Darling, K. E., Warnick, J., Guerry, W. B., & Rancourt, D. (2024). Adolescent females' dyadic conversations about body, weight, and appearance. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 39(2), 487–510. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07435584221120111>

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

6. Are environmental interventions effective in managing autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?

"Findings of this systematic review and meta-analysis suggested an association of NBIs [nature-based interventions] in group-based recreational therapy with experiential learning with positive short-term outcomes on sensory, social, and behavioral functioning for children with ASD" (Fan et al., 2023, pp. 1-2).

- Analyzed 24 nature-based studies including equine-assisted, outdoor music, and art therapy with 5-to-17-year-olds.
- Found enhancement in sensory, social and behavioral functioning, but not emotional functioning in ASD patients.
- Discovered significant improvements in attention and distractibility, sensory seeking, and sensory sensitivity.

Fan, M. S. N., Li, W. H. C., Ho, L. L. K., Phiri, L., & Choi, K. C. (2023). Nature-based interventions for autistic children: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *JAMA Network Open*, 6(12), 1–12. <https://doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.46715>

Contributor: Athena A. Drewes, PsyD, MA, MS Ed, RPT-S™, Ocala, FL

7. Do heart rate levels synchronize during child-centered play therapy between a counselor and child clients enduring adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)?

"In this study, the child participants demonstrated notable levels of relational resilience, evidenced by their levels of in-phase child-counselor heart rate synchrony during most play therapy sessions (90% of all sessions)" (Frawley & Dillman Taylor, p. 161).

- Examined relational and coregulatory change mechanisms in play sessions by collecting heart data.
- Included one counselor and four child participants (ages 5-8) who had experienced 4 or more ACEs.
- Found counselor and children had synchronous heart-rate levels through 37 out of 41 sessions.

Frawley, C., & Dillman Taylor, D. (2024). The relational change mechanisms of child-centered play therapy with children exposed to adverse childhood experiences. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 102(2), 153–162. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12500>

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

8. How to integrate Dungeons and Dragons (D&D), a roleplaying game, in play therapy for improving clinical outcomes?

"Dungeons and Dragons® (D&D) is more than just roleplaying game. D&D can help children develop real-world skills through cooperative storytelling, character development, and fantasy play" (Hartwig et al., 2024, p.1).

- Discussed benefit of applying D&D in play therapy settings (e.g., frustration tolerance, problem-solving, collaboration skills).
- Explored appropriate populations, including children, teens, and adults, for roleplaying games.
- Deliberated steps for infusing D&D into therapy groups in a 10-session model targeting ages 11-17.

Hartwig, E., Walker, E., & Stamman, J. (2024). Roll for initiative: Using Dungeons and Dragons in play therapy. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 1–14. Advanced online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15401383.2024.2322521>

Contributor: Elizabeth Derickson, MSW, LCSW, RPT-S™, Jackson, MO

9. What is the impact of play in a child and adolescent inpatient treatment program?

"While previous research of PLL [Playful Learning Landscapes] projects has demonstrated the efficacy of transforming public spaces into paces for playful learning, this research provides support that, even in private, targeted settings, using a trauma-informed approach, children and adolescents, can reap the benefits of playful learning" (Hassinger-Das et al., 2024, p. 1).

- Analyzed the interactions between 240 children/adolescents and 82 adult staff in play-infused treatment program.
- Reported that physical activities improved staff-child social interaction and staff's attunement to children.
- Found children significantly increased their communication, creativity, content, collaboration, and confidence after the treatment.

Hassinger-Das, B., Fletcher, K., Todaro, R., Scott, M., & Hirsh-Pasek, K. (2024). A hop, skip and a jump towards evaluating social interaction and learning through play at a child and adolescent inpatient treatment program. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 50(1), 1–11. Advanced online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cch.13200>

Contributor: Elizabeth Derickson, MSW, LCSW, RPT-S™, Jackson, MO

10. What concerns and worries do parents have for their late adopted children?

"We are aware that those adopted are likely to have more psychological and behavioural difficulties in adolescence and that their progression into adulthood is associated with many negative outcomes. What remains unexplored is how these adoptive parents perceive, reflect upon and experience these challenges, many of which they were already being exposed to" (Hillman et al., 2024, p. 141).

- Qualitatively studied the worries and concerns of 17 mothers about their late adopted adolescent children.
- Emerged issues included vulnerability, violence, derailing opportunities, autonomy, and anxieties about the birth family.
- Highlighted the need for ongoing services/ support for parents and their children during post-adoption years.

Hillman, S., Lajmi, N., Steel, M., Hodges, J., Simmonds, J., & Kaniuk, J. (2024). Adoptive parents' worries and concerns about their adolescent adopted children. *Adoption & Fostering*, 48(1), 126–148. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03085759241236468>

Contributor: Alyssa M. Swan, PhD, LCPC, RPT™, Bloomington, IL

11. What are the experiences of caregivers who received education and group support related to body-neutral parenting practices?

"Integrating body neutrality into the parenting approach appears to be impactful for the body image and self-efficacy of children and their caregivers alike" (Horton & Powers, 2024, p. 1).

- Provided six caregivers (of children ages 0-18) with a support group for promoting personal health.
- Reported qualitatively on gained insights of caregivers regarding their own relationships with food and bodies.
- Documented caregivers' self-perceived increased competence, parenting skills, acceptance of body image, and other strengths.

Horton, E., & Powers, M. (2024). Demoralizing food, bodies, and movement: A phenomenological exploration of caregivers' experience in a body-neutral parenting support group. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10664807231226232>

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

12. How could participating in mindfulness-based group affect elementary school students?

"Data analysis provided evidence that integrating a mindfulness curriculum within an elementary school counseling group setting has the potential to address children's stress and support the development of their self-regulation, relaxation, and attention skills" (Kempf et al., 2024, p. 15).

- Provided fifth graders (N=16) with mindfulness-based, small group sessions across eight weeks.
- Examined qualitative data produced by children via "drawing, writing, and telling" (Angell et al., 2014).
- Concluded that children's increased emotion, action regulation, and calmness/relaxation supported mindfulness-intervention usage (e.g., meditation exercise).

Kempf, K., Havlik, S., Yee, T., & Schmidt, C. (2024). You feel a lot different emotions: Examining a mindfulness-based group for elementary school students. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling*, 10(1), 15–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23727810.2023.2265764>

Contributor: Rebekah Byrd, PhD, LPC (TN), LCMHC (NC), NCC, ACS, RPT-S™, Marshall, NC

13. Does using smartphones at night affect children's school performance?

"Contrary to our expectations . . . : Using the smartphone at nighttime was related to higher school performance. One possible reason could be that children use their smartphones at night for talking and chatting on social media about school-related content and topics" (Stevic et al, 2024, p. 235).

- Studied 822 child-parent pairs (children aged 10–14 with one of their parents) in a two-wave panel survey.
- Found that children using multiple social media were more likely to use smartphones at night.
- Revealed parents perceived attention problems in children over time were related to their nighttime smartphone usage.

Stevic, A., Schmuck, D., Thomas, M. F., Karsay, K., & Matthes, J. (2024). Distracted children? Nighttime smartphone use, children's attentional problems, and school performance over time. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 44(2), 223–249. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02724316231164734>

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

14. How may Hip Hop usage in a group setting benefit high school students?

"Results suggest social and emotional benefits for youth across all groups, regardless of facilitation style. Benefits included increased confidence, a strong sense of community, experiencing joy, and a willingness to step outside of their comfort zones to collaborate and create something personally meaningful" (Travis et al., 2024, p. 43).

- Describe the gaps in social and academic engagement during summertime which could negatively influence youth.
- Explained various approaches to creating Black and Latino/ a students' own Hip Hop mixtape for self-expression.
- Examined qualitatively on 18 high-school-aged student participants in a five-day Hip Hop mixtape summer camp.

Travis, R., Jr., Levy, I. P., & Morpew, A. C. (2024). "Now we're all family": Exploring social and emotional development in a summer hip hop mixtape camp. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 41, 43–60. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-022-00821-z>

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

15. Can a DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) approach be used to identify mental health risk in toddlers?

"Our results underscore that a 'wait and see' approach, born of the assumption that atypical irritability patterns are not detectable at a very young ages, may miss important opportunities for preventive intervention at the height of neuroplasticity" (Wiggins et al, 2023, p. 7).

- Measured 365 infants/toddlers at 15 months and again at 24 months through mothers' reports.
- Recommended increasing developmental sensitivity when applying a DSM approach with young ages.

Wiggins, J. L., Ureña Rosario, A., Zhang Y., MacNeil, L., Yu, Q., Norton, E., Smith, J. D., & Wakschlag, L. S. (2023). Advancing earlier transdiagnostic identification of mental health risk: A pragmatic approach at the transition to toddlerhood. *International Journal of Methods in Psychiatric Research*, 32(S1), 1–11.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/mpr.1989>

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