



February 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. What types of parent engagement strategies could benefit children's academic success?

"The purpose of this study was to identify indicators of parent engagement in early learning that would be relevant for children's academic success; equitable for all families regardless of social, educational, or economic backgrounds; and actionable for urban school districts seeking to promote parent engagement with limited resources" (Bettencourt et al., 2023, p. 2308).

- Reported panelists' ratings of parent engagement indicators on feasibility, actionability, and relevance.
- Identified valuable strategies, including home-based activities, expectations for children's education, parent-teacher/school relationships, and communication.
- Discussed the challenges of measuring parent engagement across parents and educators

Bettencourt, A. F., Gross, D., Bower, K., Francis, L., Taylor, K., Singleton, D. L., & Han, H. R. (2023). Identifying meaningful indicators of parent engagement in early learning for low-income, urban families. *Urban Education*, 58(10), 2308-2345. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085920968619>

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

2. Can communication assistance improve the relationship between parents and their children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?

"To explore the firsthand experiences of parents of children with ASD who use assisted communication (AC) to communicate, which has yet to be explored in the literature. . . . his study provides phenomenological qualitative evidence that use of AC provides benefits to the parent-child relationship" (Damiao et al., 2024, p. 1).

- Interviewed 10 parents of autistic individuals using AC—the use of expressive language through assistive technology.
- Found four thematic areas including relational and individual improvements.

Damiao, J., Damiao, G., Cavaliere, C., Dunscomb, S., Ekelund, K., Lago, R., & Volpe, A. (2024). Parent perspectives on assisted communication and autism spectrum disorder. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 78(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2024.050343>

Contributor: Jennifer Hayes, PhD, LMFT, RPT™, Sebastian, FL

3. How are physical activity, sports, and sense of school belongingness related to adolescent mental health (MH) and substance use (SU)?

"Findings suggest possible indirect associations between school sports participation and SU/MH profiles through physical activity and school belongingness, which may be promising prevention targets that have independent associations over and above sports" (Halladay et al., 2024, p. 1).

- Examined co-occurring instances of mental health and substance use issues among 11,994 Canadian secondary students.
- Revealed the higher school-sport participation, the lower levels of mental health symptoms and substance use.

Halladay, J., Ogrodnik, M., Farag Alla, J., Sunderland, M., Gardner, L. A., & Georgiades, K. (2024). Playing for more than winning: Exploring sports participation, physical activity, and belongingness and their relationship with patterns of adolescent substance use and mental health. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 254, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2023.111039>

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

4. How can virtual delivery of parenting training support children?

“Evidence supports feasibility and efficacy of virtually-delivered parent-coaching interventions to improve child disruptive behavior (strong), anxiety (moderate), and parent–child relationship (weak)” (Hippman et al., 2023, p. 1).

- Examined the impact of virtual delivery of parent coaching interventions for concerns in children under six.
- Analyzed 777 records from 30 articles in the databases Pub-Med, CINHL, and PsycINFO for this scoping review.
- Enhanced the literature specifically focusing on virtually delivered attachment-based parenting training targeting parent-child relationship concerns.

Hippman, C., Mah, J. W. T., & MacFadden, M. (2023). Virtual delivery of parent coaching interventions in early childhood mental health: A scoping review. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10578-023-01597-8>

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

5. How is maltreated exposure associated with children’s cognitive styles and depression?

“We provide evidence that children exposed to maltreatment exhibit rumination clustering of thoughts, which is associated with depressive symptoms and neurobiological correlates of depression” (Hoffman et al., 2024, p. 31).

- Assessed children aged 6-12 ($N = 183$; 87 nonmaltreated; 96 maltreated and in welfare/protective services).
- Compared with nonmaltreated children, those exposed to maltreatment showed fewer positively valence thoughts.
- Recommended detecting thought patterns, especially for children exposed to maltreatments, to alleviate depression risk.

Hoffmann, F., Linz, R., Steinbeis, N., Bauer, M., Dammering, F., Lazarides, C., Klawitter, H., Bentz, L., Entringer, S., Winter, S. M., Buss, C., & Heim, C. (2024). Children with maltreatment exposure exhibit rumination-like spontaneous thought patterns: Association with symptoms of depression, subcallosal cingulate cortex thickness, and cortisol levels. *The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 65(1), 31–41. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13853>

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

6. Does social pretend play influence children’s social competence, behavioral skills, and peer relationships?

“Social pretend play activities thus might be a joyful alternative to conventional social skills training for fostering children’s social competence and integrating them into their peer group, also in settings where children meet only once or twice a week for a limited number of hours” (Jaggy et al., 2023, p. 23).

- Conducted an experimental study with 211 preschoolers concerning the impact of social pretend play.
- Found that active promotion of social pretend play enhances children’s social behavior and peer relationships.
- Discussed social pretend play could be an effective alternative to traditional social skills training.

Jaggy, A.-K., Kalkusch, I., Bossi, C. B., Weiss, B., Sticca, F., & Perren, S. (2023). The impact of social pretend play on preschoolers’ social development: Results of an experimental study. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 64, 13-25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2023.01.012>

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

7. What war-related, parent-related, and sociodemographic factors may increase the risk of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in Ukrainian children?

"The aims of this study were to estimate the prevalence of probable PTSD in both preschoolers (3–6 years old) and school-age children (7–17 years old) following Russia's invasion on February 24, 2022, and to identify key sociodemographic, war-related, and parent related risk factors associated with elevated risk for pediatric PTSD" (Martenkovskyi et al., 2023, p. 2).

- Surveyed 1,238 parents in Ukraine following Russia's invasion and found 14% of children presented PTSD symptoms.
- Discussed rates of PTSD in children were lower than those children in other war-related studies.
- Identified risk factors: child milestone development, parents in army/emergency services, and parental PTSD complex or anxiety.

Martsenkovskyi, D., Karatzias, T., Hyland, P., Shevlin, M., Ben-Ezra, M., McElroy, E., Redican, E., Vang, M. L., Cloitre, M., Ho, G. W. K., Lorberg, B., & Martsenkovsky, I. (2023). Parent-reported posttraumatic stress reactions in children and adolescents: Findings from the mental health of parents and children in Ukraine study. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*. Advance online publication. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/tra0001583>

Contributor: Nicole R. H. Baker, PhD, LMFT, RPT™, Elk River, MN

8. How can therapists assess and facilitate stages of client changes using sandtray?

"The purpose of this conceptual paper is to explore the direct integration of the structured World technique with the transtheoretical model of change as an assessment of readiness for change, as well as a therapeutic intervention" (McClendon et al., 2023, p. 153).

- Outlined the processes of sandtray therapy, as discussed by Homeyer and Sweeney.
- Provided a case study demonstrating the use of sandtray therapy with a 22-year-old client.
- Described rationale and prompts to facilitate progress through each stage of change.

McClendon, L., Garza, Y., Akay-Sullivan, S., & Mitchell, K. (2023). Prompting change: Utilizing the transtheoretical model in sandtray. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 18(2), 147–163. <https://doi.org/10.1080.15401383.2021.1949421>

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

9. What is the relationship between counselors' personal beliefs and self-efficacy in providing care for youth with sexual and gender minority (SGM) identities?

"The results showed that heteronormativity and self-efficacy in counseling SGM youth were negatively correlated" (Moses & Cole, 2023, p. 303).

- Surveyed 118 licensed mental health counselors; 115 of them worked with 12-17 years old.
- Found negative correlation between participants' levels of heteronormative beliefs and self-efficacy in counseling SGM youth.
- Reported counselor participants' higher competence in counseling lesbian and gay youth versus gender expansive youth.

Moses, K., & Cole, M. (2023). Heteronormativity and counselor self-efficacy working with sexual and gender minority youth. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling*, 9(3), 303–315. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23727810.2023.2221405>

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

10. Can an innovative arts-literacy program reduce youth depression and anxiety?

"Findings suggest that a brief arts-literacy intervention with challenging school material in a group setting, implemented as an afterschool program, can reduce depression and anxiety symptoms in adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa" (Osborn et al., 2023, p. 1).

- Experimented on 235 teenagers (106 in creative arts-literacy intervention; 129 in study-skills control) led by lay group facilitators.

- Found arts-based intervention relieved anxiety and depression symptoms and maintained at one-month follow-up.
- Concluded community-based, low-stigma treatments can address mental health needs of disadvantaged youth in resource-limited situations.

Osborn, T. L., Ndeti, D. M., Sacco, P. L., Mutiso, V., & Sommerg, D. (2023). An arts-literacy intervention for adolescent depression and anxiety symptoms: outcomes of randomized controlled trial of Pre-Texts with Kenyan adolescents. *eClinicalMedicine*, 66, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eclinm.2023.102288>

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

11. Does play therapy promote healing in children with leukemia?

“Leukemia is the most common form of childhood cancer worldwide. Children living with leukemia experience various problems because of the disease’s progression, harmful effects of treatment, and prolonged hospitalization process. To increase their well-being and alleviate their problems, these children require ongoing support” (Ramdaniati et al., 2023, p.19).

- Reviewed 16 studies (out of 1099 articles in 2001–2023) applying play therapy with leukemia children.
- Evaluated various approaches (play therapy based on occupational therapy, pretend play therapy, cognitive-behavioral play therapy, etc.).
- Concluded that all kinds of play therapy approaches benefit children with leukemia physically and psychologically.

Ramdaniati, S., Lismidiati, W., Haryanti, F., & Sitaresmi, M. N. (2023). The effectiveness of play therapy in children with leukemia: A systematic review. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, 73, 7–21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pedn.2023.08.003>

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

12. How might play therapists manage power dynamics in therapeutic interactions with children to prevent reinforcing dominant narratives?

“This article examines the power dynamics of a therapeutic encounter with a child ostensibly in need of greater emotional self-regulation. . . . The findings highlight the need for social workers to engage in reflexive practice; to be able to listen to children without transforming their insights into opportunities to reinforce dominant narratives” (Reid & Brough, 2023, p. 1108).

- Qualitatively analyzed the therapeutic interactions among a 9-year-old girl, her caregiver, and social worker in Australia.
- Discussed children seek connection when emotionally distressed—deviating from Western expectations of the self-regulating child.
- Articulated deconstructing assumptions about children and reflected on returning power to children in therapy.

Reid, K., & Brough, M. (2023). ‘Like the boy who cried wolf’: The tensions of hospitality and role of deconstruction in dyadic discursive therapy interactions with children and their caregivers. *Qualitative Social Work*, 22(6), 1108–1123. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14733250221123332>

Contributor: Kimberly Walker, PhD, LMHC, NCC, Shoreline, WA

13. How can a social media platform (e.g. Reddit.com) benefit youth’s help seeking for mental health?

“Youth are vulnerable to mental health challenges. Social media presents an opportunity to evaluate disinhibited mental health discourse and self-disclosure. . . . We searched two subreddits: r/mental health and r/teenagers on Reddit.com for posts made by youth (13–24 years) relating to mental health help-seeking behaviors and information needs” (Sit et al., 2024, p. 24).

- Discussed the appeal of anonymity through social media usage in overcoming mental health stigmas.
- Discovered youth obtained information via *Reddit.com* to help others, manage emotions, and understand mental illness.
- Emphasized alternative accessibility for youth preferring to remain anonymous to seek mental health literacy and help.

Sit, M., Elliot, S. A., Wright, K. S., Scott, S. D., & Hartling, L. (2024). Youth mental help-seeking information needs and experiences: A thematic analysis of Reddit Posts. *Youth & Society*, 56(1), 24–41. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X221129642>

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

14. Which intervention is more effective to improve behavior and parent relationships in Iranian children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)?

“The results demonstrated that child-centered therapy was more effective than story therapy in enhancing parent-child interaction and reducing impulsive behaviors and anxiety in preschool children with hyperactivity disorder” (Soroushvala et al., 2023, p. 164).

- Applied a quasi-experimental design assessing preschoolers in Iran (N = 60; 15 normal; 45 with ADHD).
- Reported increased positive parent-child interactions and decreased anxiety and impulsive behaviors with both interventions.
- Found a more significant, positive impact on children with child-centered play therapy than storytelling intervention.

Soroushvala, A., Merati, A., & Yousefvand, M. (2023). Comparing the effectiveness of child-centered play therapy and story therapy on parent-child interaction, impulsive behaviors, and anxiety in preschoolers with hyperactivity disorder. *Iranian Evolutionary and Education Psychology Journal*, 5(3), 164–177. [doi:10.22034/5.3.164](https://doi.org/10.22034/5.3.164)

Contributor: Lisa Morrell Dawson, MA, MS, LPC, RPT-S™, Tulsa, OK

15. Can we provide children with developmentally appropriate assessment feedback?

“Though millions of children are assessed yearly, there has been little research surrounding providing assessment feedback with children” (Weeks & Ray, 2023, p. 580).

- Reported on the creation of the *Young Children’s Assessment Feedback* (YCAF) model and its application.
- Found children (n = 10, ages 6-9) receiving developmentally informed feedback showed memory for specific feedback given.
- Revealed that participants experienced greater freedom for self-direction and self-esteem following the YCAF process.

Weeks, S. E., & Ray, D. C. (2023). Creativity in child assessment practices: Experiences with a developmentally-appropriate feedback model. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 18(4), 580–603. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15401383.2022.2076000>

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

16. Can child-centered play therapy (CCPT) help children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) cognitive symptoms in Taiwan?

“The ADHD participants were assigned into CCPT (ADHDc) and waitlist (ADHDw) group; and the ADHDc group then received CCPT weekly for 12 sessions, while the ADHDw continuously received their regular treatment (i.e., medication treatment or other alternative treatments) as usual” (Wong et al., 2023, p. 877).

- Experimented on children aged 7-12 (N = 52; 17 with ADHD vs. 35 typically developed).
- Found significant improvement in cognitive flexibility in Treatment group over the Control without change.
- Noted improvements in the total problems, social, thought problems, and internal and external problems.

Wong, T.-Y., Chang, Y.-T., Wang, M.-Y., & Chang, Y.-H. (2023). The effectiveness of child-centered play therapy for executive functions in children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 28(3), 877–894. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13591045221128399>

Contributor: Jennifer Hayes, PhD, LMFT, RPT™, Sebastian, FL

17. Can playing LEGO® increase social skills for children with autism in a school-based setting in Northern England?

"The social skills of participants in the LEGO® based therapy groups were found to have improved in a small way when compared to usual support only. The study also found that LEGO® based therapy was not very costly for school to run and parents/guardians and teachers said they thought it was good for their children and young people" (Wright et al., 2023, p. 2282).

- Experimented on children aged 7-15 ($n = 116$ with treatment; $n = 101$ without).
- Described the activities used during intervention, including participants' collaborative play involving different roles and peer-led activities.
- Found LEGO® therapy slightly improved social skills at 20 weeks but no significant change at 52 weeks.

Wright, B., Kingsley, E., Cooper, C., Biggs, K., Bursnall, M., Wang, H.-I., Chater, T., Coates, E., Teare, M. D., McKendrick, K., Gomez de la Cuesta, G., Barr, A., Solaiman, K., Packham, A., Marshall, D., Varley, D., Nekooi, R., Parrott, S., Ali, S., . . . Le Couteur, A. (2023). I-SOCIALISE: Results from a cluster randomised controlled trial investigating the social competence and isolation of children with autism taking part in LEGO® based therapy ('play brick therapy') clubs in school environments. *Autism*, 27(8), 2281–2294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613231159699>

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

18. How did parent-child separation before and after the COVID-19 pandemic effect Chinese children's mental health?

"We aimed to evaluate the differential performance of mental health in children with different experiences of parent–child separation to identify potential remedial windows; and attempted to identify additional risk and protective factors for mental health in response to the pandemic" (Wu et al., 2023, p. 2).

- Discovered adolescents' mental health continued to deteriorate while studying 723 rural Chinese children before-and-during the pandemic.
- Revealed better mental health outcomes when parent-child reunion occurred before entering adolescence (vs. the parent-child never-separated).
- Found children separated from parents had more suicide related problems during the pandemic (vs. pre-pandemic).

Wu, P., Wang, S., Zhao, X., Fang, J., Tao, F., Su, P., Wan, Y., & Sun, Y. (2023). Immediate and longer-term changes in mental health of children with parent–child separation experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 17(113), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-023-00659-y>

Contributor: Nicole R. H. Baker, PhD, LMFT, RPT™, Elk River, MN

19. Is children's mental health related to the amount of physical activity occurred early in life?

"Children who are more physically active at age 5–6 have fewer peer problems at age 10–11, and for boys, greater activity levels at age 5–6 could be an indicator of hyperactivity at age 10–11" (Yang et al., 2023, p.1).

- Found higher activity at 5–6 is associated with fewer peer problems at 10–11.
- Reported the longer sedentary time at age 5–6, the more peer problems at age 10–11.
- Discussed sports participation offers opportunities for bettering social competence, peer relationships, cognition, and mental health.

Yang, L., Corpeleijn, E., & Hartman, E. (2023). A prospective analysis of physical activity and mental health in children: the GECKO Drenthe cohort. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 20(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-023-01506-1>

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

20. What is the impact of play therapy on preschool children with separation anxiety in Turkey?

"This program was efficient in reducing separation anxiety in kindergarten. Both teachers and parents of the children included in the study reported that play therapy is an effective method for reducing separation anxiety" (Yilmaz Demirer & Topan, 2023, p. 667).

- Discussed that play therapy is recommended as a basic requirement for nursing profession in Turkey.
- Experimented on preschoolers experiencing separation anxiety ($n = 30$ with treatment vs. $n = 30$ without).
- Hypothesized correlation of children adapting to environment with play relationships and generalized adaption of environment.

Yilmaz Demirer, Ö., & Topan, A. (2023). Evaluation of the effect of play therapy on separation anxiety among preschool children: A randomized controlled study. *Balikesir Health Sciences Journal*, 12(3), 667–674. <https://doi.org/10.53424/balikesirsbd.1201148>

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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).