



Therapeutic Powers of Play

A list of the therapeutic powers of play was first presented in 1993 by Dr. Charles Schaefer, APT co-founder. It has since been expanded upon based on clinical experience and research to include 20 core agents of change. The principle underlying the therapeutic powers of play is that the play itself is the source of change, not the medium or the moderator by which change occurs.

This important distinction and its transtheoretical approach, is at the heart of how play therapy is defined by APT. The following is a list of the therapeutic powers of play as identified by Dr. Charles Schaefer and Dr. Athena Drewes:

I. Facilitates Communication

- A. Self-Expression
- B. Access to The Unconscious
- C. Direct Teaching
- D. Indirect Teaching

II. Fosters Emotional Wellness

- A. Catharsis
- B. Abreaction
- C. Positive Emotions
- D. Counterconditioning Fears
- E. Stress Inoculation
- F. Stress Management+

III. Enhances Social Relationships

- A. Therapeutic Relationship
- B. Attachment
- C. Social Competence
- D. Empathy

IV. Increases Personal Strengths

- A. Creative Problem Solving
- B. Resiliency
- C. Moral Development
- D. Accelerated Psychological Development
- E. Self-Regulation
- F. Self-Esteem

Schaefer, C. E., & Drewes, A. A. (Eds.), (2014). *The therapeutic powers of play: 20 core agents of change* (2nd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.