

Integrative Sandtray Therapy and Jungian Sandplay Therapy

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.

William Blake 1803
"Auguries of Innocence"

"Sandplay Therapy (SPT) is one of the internationally most widely applied therapy methods. SPT is applicable to numerous child and adult mental health problems. There is considerable evidence for the efficacy and effectiveness of SPT" (Roesler, C. 2019).

Sandplay or Sandtray therapies can be a powerful psychospiritual method for accessing the unconscious in a way that can bring about significant change. It is a safe, effective way of working with preverbal and nonverbal trauma while simultaneously promoting healing due to its highly containing format.

Sandplay therapy is based on the work of Dora Kalff and Carl Jung whereas Sandtray therapy is based on the work of Margaret Lowenfeld and others. Inherent in these interventions is the idea that the psyche, given the right conditions, is self-healing. In these trainings, therapists learn the nuances of Jungian Depth Psychotherapy, how to understand the images that arise from the unconscious, and how to provide "the right conditions" for healing (See Woodhouse, T. in McCarthy, D. (Ed). (2015). Subcutaneous, subcortical, subconscious and subterranean; the most toxic boy in the world's search for mum in Deep Play - Exploring the Use of Depth in Psychotherapy with Children. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers).

Many children are unable to verbalise their emotional states, particularly in the face of trauma, neglect, or abuse. The non-verbal nature of sandplay/sandtray therapy and the familiar medium of sand can help children achieve feelings of comfort and security. With little instruction from the therapist, the child is free to play and develop his or her own expression of situations. Oftentimes the children will experience a sense of independent play and will begin making assumptions and behaviour changes without cues from the therapist. This method of therapy serves as a valuable and powerful outlet for children and an incredibly insightful method of gaining access to traumatic experiences.

Sandplay/Sandtray therapy is also very useful in the treatment of children who have been sexually abused. These children will often remain silent for fear of harm or even death. They are often threatened and are in highly anxious states when they come to therapy. The relaxed and interactive setting of sandplay/sandtray therapy provides them the initial arena of safety that they need to move toward healing as a result the therapy can work well for children and young people going through pre or through court therapy as there is little risk of leading the child.

Contraindications.

These therapies do less well for very young children (with developmentally reduced impulse control ie ages up to about 4), children who have not been socially regulated (therefore cannot self-regulate) or those affected by disorganised attachments.

Research Base

"You are mistaken if you think we have to lower ourselves to communicate with children. On the contrary, we have to reach up to their feelings, stretch, stand on our tiptoes."

Janusz Korczak 1925



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