



WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR CHILD INVITES YOU INTO THE PLAYROOM

Play Therapy is a process where the child chooses objects, symbols, or types of play to express their inner concerns or work through particular problems. It is done with a trained child therapist who is skilled in interpreting the child's play and assists in promoting regulation and change. The toys are carefully selected to offer an opportunity to engage the child's imagination and express various feeling states and experiences. For example, both symbolically aggressive and passive toys are available for the child to select in their play.



While the task may appear simple (to just play), many adults struggle to fit into this child-directed space. Imagine you are an actor in a movie. Your child is the director but you do not have a script. Only your child has the script, and only tells you about each scene as it is being performed. Your child directs all of the play - creates it on the spot - and as an actor you simply follow along.

Follow your child's lead. If your child tells you to stand in the corner, repeat their words ("You want me to stand in the corner") and follow action until you receive your next set of directions from the child. Match your facial expressions to the story - if they are a bank robber, act scared!

- Try to engage **your inner child**, play and focus 100% on your child
- Do not judge, try to limit or make suggestions to your child's play
- Please do not ask your child 'Why' questions, or question what they play with. Toys at home that may not be allowed may be used by the child in this space
- This is their special space. Your role is to simply be engaged with your child, not to direct
- Your child is in charge. If they send you to jail or play fight you, don't defeat them or break out. Just summarize your role: "You put me in here so I can't hurt anyone else!" or "You've got me!"
- When your child shows emotion, reflect that back to them: "You're so excited you finally put me in jail!"
- If your child is capable of something (opening Play Doh) but asks you to do it for them, reply that you bet they can do it on their own - let them do things for themselves. If they really struggle, offer to do it together.



When in doubt, your therapist will be modelling therapy techniques that you can also use. If you feel confused about what your child is expressing, try not to judge and let the therapist guide you. Please do not ask your child to clean up - depending on the therapist's assessment they will or will not ask the child to clean.

If you find it difficult to engage, let your child know you'll wait in the reception area.