

Play Therapy – Information for Parents and Carers



What is Play Therapy and how does it work?

Play is essential for children to develop physically, emotionally and socially.

Play allows children to develop their imagination and creativity and it encourages confidence and concentration. Play helps children to make friends and to make sense of their ever changing and growing world. It also allows them to make mistakes safely.

Play is a symbolic communication – a child will often communicate through play what they cannot express with words. Play also acts as a bridge between the conscious awareness and emotional experiences.

Play Therapy is not a quick fix – each child has weekly sessions and it helps most children. These sessions will be at the same time each week.

77% to 82% of children referred show positive improvement.

Play helps children to:

- ✓ Understand relationships
- ✓ Experience and identify emotions
- ✓ Act out troublesome issues
- ✓ Practise roles
- ✓ Explore situations
- ✓ Learn, relax and have fun
- ✓ Develop physical skills
- ✓ Find out what is 'me' and what is 'not me'

Time visiting with a Play Therapist enables your child to consider and acknowledge their feelings. It helps them learn that is OK to feel and teaches them to cope with big feelings in a safe and constructive way.



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Play Therapy is integrative, it draws on many types of therapy and works well alongside most other kinds of support that your child may have in school. It is also a client-led therapy which means your child decides what they do in the playroom.

Visiting with Elaine is:

- ✓ Non-judgemental
- ✓ Non-directive
- ✓ Non-interpretive

Play Therapy has very few rules, but as many as necessary:

- Everyone in the playroom is safe
- Everything in the playroom is safe

The equipment offered in each session includes:

- ✓ A sand tray with dry sand
- ✓ A selection of symbols that will encourage the child to create any story in the tray, on the floor, or a table
- ✓ Clay – usually grey and red
- ✓ Art and drawing materials – paints, glue, glitter, collage etc.
- ✓ Small world play equipment including people, animals, vehicles and houses
- ✓ Music and movement equipment, including instruments

Depending on advice post-lockdown; dolls, caring equipment, puppets and dressing up may be available again, at a later date. As part of keeping your child safe I will now offer individual play kits and sand trays that only they will use for their play therapy.

My COVID-19 risk assessment will be available for you and you can make decisions about things like masks in the playroom when we meet. If you have any questions about keeping your child safe and what to do if they are unwell, I can answer these at our initial meeting.

Please be aware that your child may get a little messy when visiting to play. I do provide aprons, but because play therapy is non-directive, I won't insist your child puts one on (although I may suggest it).



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Each session will last for 40 minutes, and I will collect and return your child from you in Reception at Mendip Court. Please make sure I have your up-to-date mobile number and that you stay on site for the duration of the session. Occasionally, children want to finish a bit earlier than planned and it's important they can get to you if they need you. Play Therapy is hard work, so please be understanding if they are tired when they come back to you and let them share, if they want to, in their own time.

Sometimes big feelings come up in the playroom for a child and this can mean their behaviour can get worse before it gets better as they process those feelings. This is quite normal. If you're worried, or there is anything you think I need to know, please let me know. Likewise, if there is anything important that I need to tell you, I will of course let you know too. I know it's tempting to ask what is happening, but please don't quiz your child. They are always told they can tell anyone anything they like about their time in the playroom, so please let them tell you, rather than you asking them.

Sessions are £50 a time and I accept bank transfer (BACS) and cash. I will go through my illness and holiday/cancellation information with you when we meet.

I work early mornings, evenings and some of the weekend to make it as easy as possible for you to fit therapy for your child around school, extra-curricular and family commitments. Generally speaking, I work through the school holidays too.

If you decide play therapy is for you and your child, we initially will contract for 18 sessions, two of which are meetings with you (first and last session). This means an initial episode of therapy with cost £900.00, to be paid weekly. I do not give concessions and there is a long waiting list for my subsidised places.

I will make time to talk with you towards the middle of your child's sessions – usually around session 10, so that we can review the Play Therapy so far and plan together what is going to happen next. Depending on why they have come to therapy, some children only need one 'episode' of play therapy, but others may need a lot longer. Children are always welcome back for another episode at another time if they need it.



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There are lots of short videos on my website answering commonly asked questions, but you are welcome to ask me anything you need to know. I'm always happy to chat, if I can, or answer emails.

The videos can be found at www.creatingcalm.co.uk/youask

About me

My name is Elaine Hutchinson and I have worked with children and their families for over 25 years. I am a Play and Creative Arts Therapist, Autplay and TraumaPlay practitioner. I am also a coach and tutor working with schools and families and by the end of 2020 I will be a clinical supervisor working with other therapists.

About Orca

Orca is my therapy dog, she often works in my playroom with me, but you can decide if this is right for your child when we meet. There is lots of research supporting animal assisted therapy (AAT) and how a dog can make therapy more effective for a client – even if the dog is asleep in the corner! If Orca is working with a child, they always meet first and I will share with them how best to play with Orca.

Orca is half collie, half miniature poodle and she looks like a little black rug! She loves people and her favourite snack is cheese. She loves popping bubbles for children in the playroom.



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