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**

**How can practitioners help caregiver depression to reduce untreated depression and its effects on a 7-11-year-old child?**

“Addressing maternal mental health and attending to stressors that impede poverty-impacted families from child services is critical for the health and functioning of caregivers, and to ensure that children with mental health problems receive treatment” (Acri, Bornheimer, Hamovitch, & Lambert, 2018, p. 170).

- Quantitative study of 320 children, ages 7-11, and caregivers, assigned to two treatment groups.
- Examined barriers to children’s mental health services due to maternal depression.
- Caregivers with clinically significant levels of depression reported more significant barriers to treatment for their child with externalizing behavioral difficulties.


**Contributor:** Jennifer L. Gregg, EdS, LPC, RPT, NCC, Cullman, AL

**How does access to violent video games impact long term externalizing behaviors and prosocial behaviors?**

“To our knowledge, this is the first study to show that violent video game play negatively impacts benevolence, ultimately leading to a reduction in prosocial behavior. This finding suggests a higher-level change to thinking whereby one’s moral orientation toward helping others in need becomes eroded” (Coyne, Warburton, Essig, & Stockdale, 2018, p. 1875).

- Data was collected from 488 families during a 5-year period of adolescence.
- Concluded early exposure to video game violence was indirectly associated with lower levels of prosocial behavior as mediated by lower levels of benevolence.
- Considered the role of mediators: self-regulation, empathic concern, and benevolent values.


**Contributor:** Tisha Way Gaynor, MSSA, LISW-S, RPT-S, Cincinnati, OH

**How might a monitored/unmonitored chatroom service on a website for social support of adolescents and young adults with a family member who has a mental illness facilitate peer support for these youth?**

“During both the monitored and the unmonitored sessions, the young people appeared to be able to engage in constructive online conversations about both their daily experiences and the difficulties they had while trying to cope with their relative’s mental illness” (Drost, van der Krieke, Boer, Sytema, & Schippers, 2018, p. 688).

- Content analysis was conducted to explore social support and self-disclosure in chatrooms for Dutch youth who identified having a family member with mental illness.
- Indicated that sessions monitored by counselors included twice as many self-disclosing statements compared to social support statements.
- Proposed that chatrooms may be a complementary or alternative to group therapy.

**Contributor: Laura Tejada, PhD, LMFT, LCPC, RPT-S, Chicago, IL**

**How do children living in a residential refugee asylum center with institutional regulations that constrain or forbid unstructured/free play activities find ways to play?**

“The children’s political acts of resistance and struggle for play, which were hidden to the institution, demonstrated how they claimed their right to play, although this right was still structurally denied” (Karlsson, 2018, p. 311).

- Ethnographic study to explore children’s experiences in a refugee asylum in Sweden.
- That children had awareness of restrictive political and regulatory policies and found opportunities to engage in play despite environmental limitations.
- Children appeared to express themselves with play and agency despite institutional regulations.


**Contributor: Laura Tejada, PhD, LMFT, LCPC, Chicago, IL**

**What is the rationale for using Sand Tray Therapy with Juveniles in Correctional Settings?**

“The authors propose the use of sand tray therapy as a developmentally appropriate trauma-sensitive therapy that can be an engaging therapeutic approach when working with youth in correctional settings” (Parker & Cade, 2018, p. 79).

- Proposed that sand tray is a developmentally appropriate therapy which can be used in correctional settings.
- Presented a fictional case study to demonstrate application of the intervention.


**Contributor: Stephanie Pratola, PhD, LCP, RPT-S, Roanoke, VA**

**Is group play therapy just as helpful as psychoeducational groups in the schools?**

“The findings revealed that when used as a short-term intervention, child-centered group play therapy (CCGPT) was more likely to reduce classroom problem behaviors than a psychoeducational group intervention (skillstreaming) or no treatment” (Swank, Cheung, & Williams, 2018, p. 247).

- Authors using a single case research design found a decrease in total problem behaviors among CCGPT participants as compared to children attending a psychoeducational group.
- Reported the advantages to aiding school counselors in the school setting when using CCGPT.
- Described the impact of CCGRT has aiding in the development of social skills and the potential impact it has on in adding in academic success.


**Contributor: Pedro J. Blanco, PhD, LPC-S, RPT-S, CHST Denton, TX.**

**How can sand tray facilitate career decision making in college students?**

“Sand tray can be appealing to students who are overwhelmed by tests, and therefore want something different to use in exploring careers. Counselors may also pair sand tray with career information and exploratory experiences to support students with incorporating learning about external and internal factors to better assist decision-making.” (Swank & Jahn, 2018, p. 277).

- Explored four case studies using sand tray over the course of four, fifty-minute sessions.
- Directives were provided at each session, conducted by an intern and supervised by an RPT-S.
- Identified five themes: initial skepticism, helpfulness, awareness, self-expression, and continued work.


**Contributor: Tisha Way Gaynor, MSSA, LISW-S, RPT-S, Cincinnati, OH**
**How might Narrative Story Stem Technique (NSST) be used in research and treatment of adopted children?**

“…there is a relatively robust evidence base for NSSTs as a measure to assess and track developmental change in adopted children's attachment representations” (Tang, Bleys, & Vliegen, 2018, p. 1).

- Presented a systematic review of research of narrative stem story techniques [NSSTs].
- Proposed NSSTs as an appropriate measure to track developmental changes in the attachment representations of adopted children.


**Contributor: Stephanie Pratola, PhD, LCP, RPT-S, Roanoke, VA**

**How can practitioners promote evidenced-based treatment protocols in Regional Medical Centers to address the child’s needs?**

“The findings suggest that although a large portion of youth seeking mental health care presented with symptoms consistent with those addressed by common evidence-based psychotherapy protocols, less than half of these patients ever met with a therapist and less than 10% of those attended a sufficient number of sessions to complete a full treatment protocol. These results underscore the need to develop brief and flexible EBT protocols, such as modular treatments, that introduce essential elements early in the course of treatment” (Whiteside et al., 2018, p. 1).

- Retrospective review of the mental health records of 495 children, ages 7-17 years.
- Proposed that the length of EBTs exceeds service delivery practices and presents a barrier to dissemination and implementation of protocols.
- Encouraged mental health providers to contribute adapt EBTs as needed for clinical practice.


**Contributor: Jennifer L. Gregg, EdS, LPC, RPT, NCC, Cullman, AL**

**Does play therapy help aggressive children?**

“The purpose of the current study was to test the effectiveness of CCPT on children exhibiting maladaptive and non-normative levels of aggressive behaviours in an elementary school setting, specifically by exploring the components of empathy and self-regulation as they relate to aggression” (Wilson, & Ray, 2018, p. 401).

- Authors reported that the parents of the aggressive children who attended play therapy perceived their children’s level of aggression decreased, with increases in empathy and self-regulation, compared to the children who did not receive play therapy.
- Authors indicated no significant differences in teacher perceptions for the study, however they did discuss the potential and a rational for not finding significance.
- Reported the development of empathy in aggressive children may be caused directly by routine support and indirect modelling of the play therapist.


**Contributor: Pedro J. Blanco, PhD, LPC-S, RPT-S, CHST Denton, TX**

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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).