Theraplay Activities:
A WINDOW INTO ATTACHMENT

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Why is Theraplay effective for healing children’s attachment issues? The key is not the activities. The activities are just the vehicles that facilitate connection. The key is that we lend the child, and teach the parents to lend their child, our whole selves to help them organize into healthier, happier people. How does this happen?

Theraplay changes a child’s implicit relational knowing, which is a person’s non-conscious expectation of what will come from interacting with another human being. The patterns of interactions between a parent and child are established during infancy when a parent responds in an attuned way (or not) to the baby’s signal turn. These patterns turn into schemas that are neurologically “set” in the brain over the first three years. The more they are repeated, the more they are reinforced. These repeated schemas in the brain turn into a child’s internal working model in relation to attachment figures. Most of the children we work with have insecure attachment patterns. In Theraplay, we are giving the child interpersonal experiences that are non-congruent with their (insecure) internal working model, thereby challenging their brain to develop new, healthier implicit relational knowledge of what it’s like to be in a relationship.

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HELP! MY CHILD RUNS AWAY!!

Any parent whose child runs away can feel scared and frustrated. Children run away for a variety of reasons. Many parents struggle to identify warning signs and how to prevent it. 

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LOOKING FOR A THERAPIST?
FIND A THERAPIST WHO SPECIALIZES IN PLAY THERAPY
When Sad Looks Mad

Many times, children from hard places tend to act mad, when that is not what they are feeling at all. Why is that? The answers are really quite obvious when we remember where they came from.

A child, who has lived for an extended period of time absent of the love and care of a family, generally did not have a caring adult in their life that helped them to identify and express their feelings. Even if a child from a hard place did have the ability to name their feelings, the adults in their lives generally did not have time to listen and validate the child’s feelings. Feelings became confusing and scary things that the child developed mechanisms to avoid. One of these coping mechanisms is to turn sad into mad.

When something happens to a child from a hard place that makes them feel sad, they feel overwhelmed and out of control. Sadness reminds them of the feelings that accompanied their lives when they were abandoned, abused, or neglected. In order to protect themselves from these feelings, they will often turn sad feelings into mad feelings. Whereas feeling sad makes them feel victimized and scared, feeling mad, makes them feel strong and in control. And, strong and in control feels much safer than victimized and scared.

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