

Sandplay Therapy

What is Sandplay Therapy?

Sandplay Therapy is a powerful form of psychotherapy, which is based on the work of Swiss Child Therapist, Dora Kalff and also draws on the psychology of Carl Jung.

Using an assortment of miniature figures or objects, and a tray containing sand, Sandplay offers the child the chance to create a picture, image, story or sculpture in a box of sand, known as the sand tray, which is a representation of their deeper inner world.



Sandplay is primarily a non-verbal, non-rational way of working, and may be used alongside other therapeutic approaches. Clients can talk about what they have created or not depending upon how they feel.

What are the Benefits of Sandplay Therapy?

Sandplay Therapy may be a useful way of supporting children and young people who are not able to explain in words how they are feeling or what is troubling them.

"Play is the child's natural medium of self expression. It is an opportunity which is given to the child to 'play out' [their] feelings and problems, just as in certain types of adult therapy an individual 'talks' out [their] difficulties". (Axline 1969 p9)

Nurturing relationships and play are essential to the successful development of a healthy functioning brain, especially in children and young people who have had difficult or adverse childhood experiences.

The relationship between the child and the therapist, and the process of Sandplay, may therefore help the growth of the child or young person's developing brain, as well as the development of their sense of self. This may in turn help them to do better at school.

When Might Sandplay Help?

Sandplay Therapy is effective with clients of all ages and, when practiced with a trained therapist, works with the unconscious in a way that is safe and contained.

Sandplay Therapy may help children and young people who:

- Have adverse childhood experiences and / or social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties.
- Have suffered a traumatic incident or shows signs of developmental trauma.
- Have suffered emotional, physical or sexual abuse.
- Have suffered a loss or bereavement of any kind.
- Suffer because of separated / divorced parents.
- Suffer from anxiety, stress or phobias.
- Have nightmares or disturbed sleep.
- Are withdrawn or not realising their full potential academically, or socially.
- Are at risk of being / or are already excluded from school.
- Are (or in the process of being) adopted or fostered, or have experienced disrupted care.

What to Expect

Each session lasts approximately 45 - 50 minutes, plus 15 minutes for writing notes and tidying. The average block of Sandplay Therapy for children and young people is 12 sessions. Children with complex needs typically require more than 12 sessions.

The Sandplay Therapist will normally carry out the Sandplay sessions at the venue where the child or young person attends school. The room designated for Sandplay Therapy provides a 'free and protected space' for the child or young person, away from any interruptions.

Professional Supervision

Professional supervision is part of the therapist's professional ethics and code of practice. The purpose of supervision is to ensure that the therapist is supported and the interests of the child are protected.

The therapist will take a photo of the child or young person's finished Sandtray each week. These photos may be shown to the therapist's supervisor, who is a highly trained Sandplay Therapist (Consultant).

Monitoring, Evaluation & Reporting

We measure the effectiveness of Sandplay Therapy through children and young people's comments, parent / carer feedback and discussions with staff, in combination with robust evaluation measures and/ or the school's usual monitoring processes.

Additionally, before therapy begins, parent / carers will be offered an opportunity to meet or talk with the therapist, at which time there will be the opportunity to ask questions.

At the end of a block of therapy, the therapist will contact parents / carers again for their views. Student and teacher views are also collected at the end of the therapeutic process.

Further Information

For more information, please contact:

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Confidentiality & Safeguarding

Sandplay sessions are completely confidential. However, the therapist is able to discuss general progress with parents / carers or school staff. The images that are created in the sand are photographed only for the purposes of supervision. The sand tray images are never interpreted or shared in any written reports.

If the child discloses anything that poses a safeguarding risk, then the therapist will let the relevant people know and follow the school or setting's safeguarding policy.

About Juliette Ttofa

Juliette Ttofa is a Registered Sandplay Therapist (STR) with the Association for Sandplay Therapy (AST). The AST is an international professional organization dedicated to the highest quality training and registration of mental health clinicians as Sandplay Therapists.

Juliette is also a Chartered Psychologist with the BPS and an HCPC registered Practitioner Psychologist.