

# PLAY THERAPY

## OVERVIEW

### **What is Play Therapy?**

Play therapy is generally employed with children aged 3 through 11 and provides a way for them to express their experiences and feelings through a natural, self-guided, self-healing process. As children's experiences and knowledge are often communicated through play, it becomes an important vehicle for them to know and accept themselves and others. During Play Therapy, children are encouraged to express their feelings through play activity. With the help of a trained therapist, the goal is to help resolve psychosocial difficulties, gain skills and achieve optimal growth and development. As a form of counseling or psychotherapy, play is used to communicate with and help to prevent or resolve psychosocial challenges. This can help them achieve better social integration, growth and development.

Play therapy can also be used as a tool of diagnosis. A play therapist observes a client playing with toys (play-houses, pets, dolls, etc.) to determine the cause of the disturbed behavior. The objects and patterns of play, as well as the willingness to interact with the therapist, can be used to understand the underlying rationale for behavior both inside and outside the session.

Play therapy can create a natural environment for children to:

- Create their own paths to problem and/or conflict resolution
- Learn and practice positive behavioral and social skills
- Improve communication
- Promote cognitive development
- Express and experience emotion
- Develop respect and empathy for others' thoughts and feelings
- Increase confidence and self esteem

