

Theraplay® is a structured and focused technique designed to enhance the attachment between children and their care-giver. Activities in Theraplay® are designed to be fun, playful and interactive and personal. The principles of Theraplay® are based on Attachment Theory and model the healthy, secure and positive relationship between parents/carers and their children. Theraplay® is multi-sensory: involving touch, movement, rhythm, eye contact and emotion which are all key aspects to successful brain regulation and relational development.

Theraplay® interactions focus on four dimensions found in parent/carer-child relationships:

- Structure: The adult, the leader in the relationship, creates organization and predictability for the child which communicates safety
- Engagement: The adult is present in a manner that the child experiences being seen, heard, felt, and accepted
- Nurture: The adult provides caring that can calm and soothe the child in a manner that makes them feel good physically and emotionally
- Challenge: The adult supports the child in the acquisition and mastery of new skills, enhancing the child's sense of competence and confidence

Theraplay® sessions create an active, emotional connection between the child and parent or caregiver, resulting in a changed view of the self as worthy and lovable and of relationships as positive and rewarding.

The Theraplay® therapist guides the parent/carer and child through playful, fun games, developmentally challenging activities, and tender, nurturing activities. The very act of engaging each other in this way helps the parent regulate the child's behaviour and communicate love, joy, and safety to the child. It helps the child feel secure, cared for, connected and worthy.

Theraplay uses practitioner guidance to create playful and caring child-adult interactions that foster joyful shared experiences. These activities build attunement and understanding of each other - replicating early relationship experiences that are proven to lead to secure attachment. The interactions are personal, physical and fun - a natural way for everyone to experience the healing power of being together. Parents learn to play with their child in a way that establishes felt safety, increases social engagement, expands arousal regulation, and supports the development of positive self-esteem for both the child and the parent.

For more information about Theraplay®, please visit the Theraplay Institute Website <https://theraplay.org>



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