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UGC and ISSN Approved, 5.75 Impact Factor

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UGC and ISSN Approved

An International Open Access Journal  
UGC and ISSN Approved | E-ISSN 2348-1269,  
P- ISSN 2349-5138

INTERNATIONAL  
JOURNAL OF RESEARCH  
AND ANALYTICAL REVIEWS

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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH  
AND ANALYTICAL REVIEWS (IJRAR)

*International Peer Reviewed, Open Access  
Journal*

E-ISSN 2348-1269, P- ISSN 2349-5138 | Impact factor: 5.75 | ESTD Year: 2014

UGC and ISSN Approved and added in the UGC Approved List of Journals .

Website: [www.ijrar.org](http://www.ijrar.org)



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**IJRAR**

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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH AND ANALYTICAL REVIEWS (IJRAR) is published under the Name of IJAR publication and URL: [www.ijrar.org](http://www.ijrar.org).



E-ISSN 2348-1269, P- ISSN 2349-5138

©IJRAR Journal

Published in India

Typesetting: Camera-ready by author, data conversation by IJAR Publishing Services – IJAR Journal.

IJAR Journal, [WWW.IJAR.ORG](http://WWW.IJAR.ORG)

E-ISSN 2348-1269, P- ISSN 2349-5138

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH AND ANALYTICAL REVIEWS (IJRAR) (IJRAR) is published in online form over Internet. This journal is published at the Website <http://www.ijrar.org>, maintained by IJAR Gujarat, India.



# Play Therapy: A Review

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**ABSTRACT-** Play therapy is a psychological therapy that helps a child to resolve or overcome their psychosocial challenges through different techniques. Both directive play therapy and non directive play therapy help clients to achieve optimal growth and development by resolving their issues. Directive play therapy is the therapist centred technique while the non-directive play therapy is the client-centred technique. The best therapy to be chosen depends on the situation and the problem which the client is facing or dealing with.

**Keywords:** play therapy, directive play therapy, non-directive play therapy, therapist, client.

Play is a necessary component in the lives of children. Children do not simply play because they have excess energy and nothing to do with their time(Landreth,1982). Children use play to communicate with others, to express feelings and emotions, to explore relationships with peers and adults and to cope with painful or confusing experiences ( Fall, Balvanz, Johnson and Nelson,1999; Lucco,1991). Play is children's universal behaviour and innate mode of self-expression. All children irrespective of their life going quite smoothly or experiencing certain complexities through the entire period of their development adopt play as a spontaneous way to express their emotions and thoughts just like adults use language (Axline V.M).

Play Therapy is a form of counselling or psychotherapy that uses play to communicate with and help people, specially children, to prevent or resolve psycho social challenges. This is thought to help them towards better social integration, growth and development , emotional modulation, and trauma resolution. "Play Therapy ingeniously undertakes the hardwork of child psychotherapy in the appealing guise of play" (Webb,1991). Play Therapy is a psychological therapy that utilizes developmental stages and toys, games, creativity, imagination and other common aspects of childhood expression, experience and skills as a way to help an individual resolve psychological issues that are not or cannot be resolved by more standard talking therapy (CBT Institute,1995). Play Therapy or play-based interventions are widely used to facilitate communication between therapist and children and to help children's understanding of events. It is a better medium of communication as play itself may create emotional reactions and make such emotional reactions more powerful. In therapy, therapist can use a puppet animal or a telephone while interviewing the child to serve this purpose(Landreth GL, Homeyer LE, Sweeney DS). According to the Association for Play Therapy (2002), play therapy is a "systematic use of a theoretical model to establish an interpersonal process in which trained play therapists use the therapeutic powers of play to help clients prevent or resolve psychosocial difficulties and achieve optimal growth and development."

Play therapy can also be used as a tool for 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 of therapy session. Caution, however, should be taken when using play therapy for assessment and/or diagnostic purposes(Paulina F. Kernberg; Saralea E. Chazan; Lina Normandin (1998).

In a relationship characterized by understanding and acceptance, the play process also allows children to consider new possibilities not possible in reality, thus greatly expanding the expression of self. In the safety of the play therapy experience, children explore the unfamiliar and develop a knowing that is both experiential-feeling and cognitive. It can then be said that through the process of play therapy, the unfamiliar becomes familiar, and children express outwardly through play what has taken place inwardly. A major function of play in play therapy