

How Play Therapy Helps Your Child Feel Better and Improve Behaviour



Toronto | Orangeville



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A Compassionate Approach to Children's Mental Health

It can be challenging for parents when their child is struggling with emotional or behavioural issues. Whether it's a sudden change in behaviour, ongoing anxiety, or challenges at home or school, these struggles can leave parents feeling uncertain and overwhelmed.

AERCS is dedicated to supporting children's mental health through the evidence-based approach of play therapy. Designed specifically for children aged 3 to 12, play therapy uses the natural language of play to help children express their feelings, process challenges, and develop healthier ways of coping. Our team of trained professionals provides a compassionate, child-centred environment where healing and growth can take place.

Whether you are in Orangeville, Toronto, or the GTA, AERCS is ready to support your family with expert care and a deep commitment to your child's well-being.

Who Can Benefit from Play Therapy?

Play therapy can help children facing a wide range of challenges, including:

- Anxiety or excessive worry that interferes with daily life.
- Anger or emotional outbursts that are difficult to manage.
- Withdrawal or sadness that affects their ability to connect with others.
- Traumatic experiences, such as loss, accidents, or exposure to conflict.
- Behavioural issues, such as defiance or difficulty following rules.
- Challenges with self-esteem or confidence that impact their interactions.

It's natural for parents to feel unsure about seeking help, but taking this step is a proactive way to support your child's emotional health. Play therapy provides a safe space where your child can process their experiences, learn new skills, and build resilience. By choosing to seek support, you are helping your child grow into a more confident, capable individual.

At AERCS, we are here to walk alongside you on this journey, offering expertise and encouragement every step of the way.

Why Children Struggle and How Parents Can Recognize the Signs



Children, like adults, face challenges that can overwhelm their ability to cope. However, children process these challenges differently, often expressing their struggles through behaviours rather than words. Some common triggers for emotional and behavioural difficulties include:

Common Triggers of Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

Stressful Life Events:

Major changes or losses, such as a death in the family, divorce, or frequent relocations, can create confusion and insecurity in children.

Traumatic Experiences:

Events like car accidents, bullying, abuse, or exposure to violence can leave lasting emotional impacts, even if the child appears to "move on".

Daily Challenges:

Academic pressures, difficulty making friends, or managing expectations at home and school can feel overwhelming for children, leading to frustration and emotional distress.

These triggers often affect a child's sense of safety and stability, which are essential for healthy emotional development. Recognizing these stressors is the first step in helping your child navigate them.

Signals to Watch For

Children don't always have the words to explain how they feel, so their struggles often show up as changes in behaviour or mood. As a parent, you may notice some of these signs:

Sudden Changes in Behaviour:

A child may begin "acting out" by becoming defiant, refusing to follow directions, or engaging in aggressive behaviour. Alternatively, they might avoid activities they once enjoyed or struggle to concentrate.

Shifts in Mood:

Increased anxiety, frequent crying, or withdrawal from family and friends may indicate that your child is feeling overwhelmed. Conversely, irritability or unexplained anger may suggest inner frustration or sadness.

Reactions from Others:

Teachers, coaches, or caregivers may share concerns about your child's behaviour or social interactions. Pay attention to these observations, as they can provide valuable insight into struggles your child might not be sharing at home.

By noticing these signals, you're already taking an important step toward helping your child. Understanding their challenges and seeking appropriate support, like play therapy, can help them regain confidence and emotional balance.

Introducing Play Therapy: A Unique Path to Healing



Play therapy is a specialized therapeutic approach that helps children express their thoughts and feelings in a natural and comfortable way—through play. Designed for children aged 3 to 12, it leverages the power of play to help children address emotional, social, and behavioural challenges.

What is Play Therapy?

A trained play therapist works with your child in a supportive environment, encouraging them to use toys, art supplies, and imaginative play to explore their experiences. Unlike traditional talk therapy, which relies on verbal communication, play therapy allows children to process their feelings in a way that feels safe and accessible to them.



The goal of play therapy is to provide your child with the tools to heal, grow, and build healthier coping mechanisms. It's not just about playing; it's about creating a space where your child can express themselves, work through their challenges, and discover new ways to navigate the world around them.

Why Play Therapy Works

Children naturally communicate and process their emotions through play. It's how they learn, explore, and make sense of their experiences. Play therapy takes this instinctive behaviour and uses it as a tool for healing and growth. Here's why it's effective:

Safe Expression of Emotions:

Through toys, stories, and imaginative scenarios, children can safely express feelings that may be too overwhelming or confusing to verbalize.

Processing Difficult Experiences:

By symbolically acting out events or emotions, children can process past experiences, release "stuck" feelings, and develop new perspectives.

Building New Skills:

Play therapy encourages problem-solving, decision-making, and emotional regulation. These skills help children develop healthier behaviours and stronger self-esteem.

For many children, play therapy is a transformative experience. It offers a way to confront their fears, release their frustrations, and build the confidence they need to thrive.

Why Choose Play Therapy for Your Child?

If your child is struggling with emotional or behavioural challenges, play therapy provides a compassionate and effective path forward. It's not about forcing your child to confront their problems but creating an environment where they feel empowered to explore and resolve them at their own pace.

At AERCS, we specialize in tailoring play therapy to meet the unique needs of every child. Our locations provide welcoming spaces where your child can feel safe and supported. With our team of experienced therapists, we are here to help your child feel better, improve their behaviour, and build the emotional tools they need for lifelong success.



Core Benefits of Play Therapy



Children often struggle to process events that are overwhelming, frightening, or confusing. These experiences can leave emotional "baggage" that interferes with their ability to cope and thrive. Play therapy provides a safe, structured way for children to revisit and make sense of stressful or traumatic experiences.

Processing Stressful or Traumatic Events

By symbolically acting out events through toys or creative activities, children can process their emotions in a way that feels natural. For example, a child who experienced a car accident might use toy cars to recreate and process the event. This kind of symbolic play allows "stuck" feelings to be released, helping the child regain a sense of emotional balance. Over time, the healing environment of play therapy empowers children to move forward with greater resilience and confidence.



Expressing Feelings in a Safe Space

Many children struggle to express their emotions, especially when they feel intense anger, fear, or sadness. Play therapy offers a safe, judgement-free environment where children can explore these feelings in ways that might not be possible at home or school.

Through play, children can symbolically release their emotions. For example, a child might show anger by crashing toy cars or express sadness through a puppet's story. As feelings are safely expressed and acknowledged, their intensity diminishes. This emotional release helps children develop a better understanding of their feelings, paving the way for healthier emotional regulation.



Exploring Creativity and New Ideas

Play therapy encourages children to think creatively, which is essential for problem-solving and emotional growth. By imagining different scenarios, children can explore new ways of thinking and behaving. For example, a child might create a story where a helpless character finds the strength to overcome obstacles.

Through this imaginative process, children can gain:

- A sense of empowerment and control.
- Hope and optimism by imagining positive outcomes.
- The ability to understand different perspectives, building empathy for others.

Play therapy nurtures your child's creativity, helping them to approach challenges with fresh ideas and confidence.

Developing Decision-Making and Self-Control

In play therapy, children are encouraged to make choices and take ownership of their actions. For example, a child might decide which toy to play with or how a story should unfold. These small decisions build confidence and self-reliance, especially in children who may struggle with shyness or indecisiveness.

For children who face challenges with boundaries or rules, play therapy provides opportunities to learn self-control in a supportive way. Therapists may set limits during play, encouraging children to take responsibility for their behaviour. Over time, these experiences foster better decision-making skills and internal self-regulation.



Improving Communication and Relationships

Children often have difficulty putting their worries, fears, or needs into words. Play therapy provides a way for them to "speak" through toys and creative activities. By observing your child's play, therapists gain insight into their inner world and can better understand what they are experiencing.

Parents also benefit, as therapists can share these insights and help guide family interactions to better support the child's emotional needs. Improved communication strengthens relationships and builds a stronger foundation for connection and trust.



Learning Better Ways to Think and Act

Play therapy helps children learn new strategies for managing their feelings and behaviours. Therapists may introduce specific activities or lessons during sessions, such as:

- Deep breathing or relaxation exercises to manage anxiety.
- Puppet shows or role-playing to demonstrate healthy social interactions.
- Correcting misunderstandings (e.g., "It's not your fault") to reframe negative thoughts.

Through these tools, children develop better coping skills and gain a clearer understanding of themselves and the world around them. These positive changes carry over into their daily lives, helping them thrive at home, school, and beyond.

What to Expect in a Play Therapy Session



The playroom is a carefully designed space where children feel safe, comfortable, and free to express themselves. It is filled with a variety of therapeutic tools, including:

The Playroom Setup

- Toys for symbolic play (e.g., dolls, puppets, miniature figures, and vehicles).
- Creative materials (e.g., art supplies for drawing, painting, or crafting).
- Props for imaginative play (e.g., dress-up clothes, pretend cooking sets).
- Games and building materials to foster problem-solving and collaboration.

Each item is thoughtfully chosen to encourage exploration and communication. The playroom provides a judgement-free environment where your child can process their emotions and experiences in their own way.



Therapeutic Progression

A play therapy session typically begins with the child leading the way. In early sessions, the therapist focuses on building trust and allowing your child to express themselves freely. For example, your child may choose a toy or activity and play in an open-ended manner.

As therapy progresses, the therapist may gently guide the child toward specific activities or themes that address their unique challenges.

This might include symbolic play to process a difficult event, role-playing to build social skills, or structured games to practise emotional regulation. The pace and focus of therapy are tailored to your child's individual needs, ensuring they feel safe and supported throughout the process.

Age-Appropriate Techniques

Play therapy is always adapted to the age and developmental stage of the child:

Younger Children (Ages 3–7):

Sessions often revolve around pretend play, creative activities, and sensory exploration. Puppets, sandbox toys, and dress-up props are common tools to help younger children express themselves.

Older Children (Ages 8–12):

Play therapy for older children may include more structured activities, such as journaling, problem-solving games, or role-playing. The therapist may also incorporate discussions that help children process their feelings and experiences verbally.

These techniques ensure that therapy meets your child where they are, fostering growth and healing in a way that feels natural and engaging.

Partnering with Parents: Your Role in the Process



Play therapy is most effective when parents and therapists work together to support the child's growth. While the playroom is a private and safe space for your child, your involvement is key to reinforcing positive changes outside of therapy.

Collaborating with Your Child's Play Therapist

Your child's play therapist will communicate regularly with you to provide updates on progress, share insights, and discuss strategies for supporting your child at home. This collaboration may include:

- Helping you understand the emotional or behavioural patterns your child is working through.
- Offering practical advice to address specific challenges your child faces in daily life.
- Answering questions and addressing any concerns you have about your child's progress.

The therapist will respect your child's confidentiality, sharing only the information necessary to help you support them effectively.

Supporting Your Child at Home

What happens between therapy sessions is just as important as what happens during them. You play a vital role in reinforcing the skills and coping strategies your child develops in therapy. Here are ways you can support your child:

- **Provide a Consistent Routine:** Stability at home helps children feel secure and supported.
- **Encourage Open Communication:** Let your child know it's okay to talk about their feelings and experiences.
- **Model Healthy Coping Strategies:** Show your child how you handle stress or challenges in constructive ways.
- **Celebrate Progress:** Acknowledge even small improvements in your child's behaviour or emotional regulation to build their confidence.

Your involvement creates a nurturing environment where your child can practise and strengthen the positive changes they're working on in therapy.

Ongoing Feedback and Adjustments

Every child's journey is unique, and play therapy is an adaptive process. Your child's therapist will work closely with you to monitor their progress and make adjustments as needed. Regular check-ins help ensure that therapy remains effective and aligned with your child's evolving needs.

These discussions may include:

- Reviewing goals and milestones.
- Identifying new areas of concern or emerging strengths.
- Exploring ways to deepen your child's growth through additional strategies or resources.

Together, you and your child's therapist will create a supportive partnership focused on your child's long-term well-being and success.

Why Choose AERCS for Your Child's Play Therapy Needs?



AERCS is proud to serve families in Orangeville and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) that make accessing quality play therapy simple and stress-free. Whether you're located in a smaller community or a busy urban area, our team is committed to providing compassionate and professional care tailored to your child's needs.

Local Expertise in Orangeville and the GTA



Our therapists understand the diverse challenges faced by families in Ontario and are skilled in addressing a wide range of emotional and behavioural issues. At AERCS, you'll find a trusted partner who shares your commitment to your child's well-being.

Qualified Play Therapists

The success of play therapy depends on the expertise of the therapist, and AERCS takes pride in its team of highly trained professionals. Each therapist has specialized training in play therapy techniques and childhood development, ensuring they can connect with your child on their level.

Our therapists are not only qualified but also compassionate. They bring patience, empathy, and a deep understanding of how to help children navigate their emotional worlds. With AERCS, you can feel confident that your child is in skilled and caring hands.

Welcoming, Child-Focused Environment

AERCS provides a warm and inviting atmosphere where children feel safe and supported. Our playrooms are thoughtfully designed with a wide variety of toys, games, and creative materials that encourage self-expression and exploration.

From the moment your child walks into an AERCS location, they are welcomed into a space that fosters curiosity, trust, and growth. This carefully curated environment plays a crucial role in helping children feel comfortable and ready to engage in the therapeutic process.

At AERCS, we are dedicated to helping children and families thrive. Our expertise, welcoming environment, and commitment to your child's success make us a trusted choice for play therapy in Orangeville and the GTA. Let us help your child feel better, improve their behaviour, and build a brighter future. Contact us today to learn more about how we can support your family.

Final Thoughts and Next Steps



Play therapy offers children a safe, creative, and supportive environment to address emotional and behavioural challenges. By working with a trained therapist, children can develop healthier coping skills, build confidence, and improve their behaviour in lasting ways.

Hope, Healing, and Positive Outcomes

Research shows that play therapy is an effective treatment for a wide variety of challenges, from anxiety and trauma to behavioural difficulties and low self-esteem. At AERCS, we have seen the positive transformations that children and their families experience when given the right tools and support.

We believe in your child's potential to heal, grow, and thrive. Play therapy isn't just about addressing problems—it's about building resilience and opening the door to a brighter, more confident future.



Booking Your First Appointment

Taking the first step toward getting help for your child can feel overwhelming, but AERCS is here to make the process simple and supportive. Here's how to get started:

1. **Reach Out to Us:** Contact AERCS by phone, email, or through our website to learn more about our play therapy services.
2. **Schedule a Consultation:** Our team will help you book an initial consultation to discuss your child's needs and answer any questions you may have.
3. **Begin the Journey:** Once therapy begins, we'll guide your family through every step, offering expertise, encouragement, and tailored support along the way.

Our locations are ready to serve families in the GTA and beyond. Don't wait to give your child the support they need to feel better and thrive.

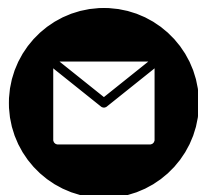
Your child's emotional well-being matters, and play therapy can be the key to unlocking their potential. At AERCS, we are dedicated to providing compassionate, expert care that meets your child where they are and helps them grow into the confident, capable person they're meant to be.

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT

For additional information, or to begin the process of therapy at AERCS, please contact us to book a complementary 20 minute phone call consultation.



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AERCS - GLORIA SEGOVIA

Gloria Segovia, MSW, RSW, RP

In Person and Online

Gloria Segovia is a Dual-language (English and Spanish) Registered Psychotherapist and Registered Clinical Social Worker with over 15 years of experience. She is experienced in providing clinical social work and psychotherapy to children, youth, families, and couples. Gloria has worked in private practice as well as in the hospital sector, and supervises masters level social work students in their practicum through York University.



Gloria is an empathic and compassionate master's level social worker with over a decade of experience in supporting people through mental health and addiction challenges. She specializes in addiction and relapse prevention as well as couples counseling. Gloria is registered with the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers and the College of Registered Psychotherapy of Ontario, both in excellent standing.

As a child therapist, Gloria's focus is to help children and families overcome challenges and promote emotional wellness. With extensive experience working with children of all ages, she has developed a strong passion for empowering children to become confident, resilient, and happy individuals.

Using evidence-based therapies and techniques, such as play therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, emotion focused therapy and trauma-informed care, Gloria works with children to address a wide range of emotional and behavioral concerns, including anxiety, depression, ADHD, ADD, OCD, trauma, and behavioral problems. She believes in a holistic approach that includes collaboration with parents and caregivers to help them better understand their child's needs and develop effective parenting strategies.

Gloria is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for children to express themselves and explore their feelings. She believes in a strengths-based approach that emphasizes a child's unique strengths and abilities and strives to create a positive and uplifting atmosphere where children can build their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Through ongoing professional development, Gloria stays up to date with the latest research and best practices in the field of child therapy, and is dedicated to providing the highest quality of care to every child and family I work with.



Gloria Segovia with a client in the AERCS Orangeville office.

Belief in Strength-Based

Gloria believes that we all have the ability to grow and change. This leads her to pay attention to client strengths, in addition to their challenges. It is her belief that therapy cannot only help clients address concerns and symptoms, but also assist them in developing greater connection and meaning in their lives.

Safe Environment

Gloria's experience in various roles has given her the opportunity to work with individuals of diverse backgrounds. As such, it is important to recognize and respect the full range of our differences. In doing so and in Gloria's therapeutic practice, she remains committed to fostering a safe environment which promotes equality, inclusion and diversity. As a therapist, it is Gloria's aim to foster an environment where you feel safe to unpack your vulnerabilities and emotional burdens.

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT

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