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The Benefits of Short-Term Play Therapy

Often short-term play and family therapy is perceived to be a long-term and intense commitment. Images of lying on a couch and revealing your innermost thoughts and feelings may still persist these days. On the contrary, therapy to deal with emotional issues can often be provided on a short-term basis and produce tangible and long-lasting benefits.

A recent success story at Stepping Stones provides a good example of the benefits of short-term therapy. A three-year old child was having difficulty in preschool because she was aggressive with other children and was unable to participate in many group activities. A social worker first spoke at length over the phone to the child's mother, to learn about the child's background and current situation.

The social worker then observed her in her preschool and visited her again in his home with her mother and younger sibling.

Treatment goals were developed and a modality was chosen. Because the child was experiencing the most difficulty in social situations such as school, play therapy was conducted in that setting.

The social worker shadowed the child, assisting her in social situations and modeling for her methods of interacting (con't on page 2)

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Summer Schedule

PLEASE let your child's therapist know **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE** about your summer vacation plans. This will help us tremendously to re-schedule other

children who cannot make their regular therapy sessions. Your child's therapist will keep you abreast of their vacation plans.

Play Therapy (con't)

appropriately with others. After three sessions in school, both the teacher and the child's mother reported marked improvement in the child's functioning. The child had not had an aggressive incident in over one month.

Not only has the child's current symptoms decreased, but the modality is now established and can resume at any time if the symptoms recur or if new problems arise. The social worker now knows the child, the family and the school situation and is available for future phone consultation and/or periodic check-ins with the school. Thus, for many issues, a few short sessions can result in a decrease in symptoms and set up the forum in which to address future issues in a timely and efficient manner.

Short-term parent consultation has also proven to be an effective and efficient way to address issues that arise periodically with children. It is often helpful to sit down with a social worker to discuss a child's problem behaviors, the best strategies to use to address certain emotional and behavioral issues, and sibling and family dynamics. Often one or two sessions may be sufficient to answer questions and alleviate stressors. After that, the option is always available for future issues that arise.

If you want to learn more about the services available through our social worker, Carol Liu, you can call her directly at mailbox 3 or talk to Beth or Rachelle next time you're in the office.

Therapeutic Vacation Activities

We are often asked for suggestions of therapeutic activities to do with children during vacation. Here are our thoughts:

- Have your child help with the planning and preparation for your trip by: making a list of items you may need, helping to pack the luggage, looking at maps, drawing a map, writing an itinerary of things they want to do when they arrive and helping with shopping before you leave.
- While traveling by car, train or airplane, try miniature travel games (small "Connect Four," or "Checkers," available at most toy stores), miniature sensory toys (small play doh containers, small slinky's,) or word guessing games ("I'm thinking of something that is a red, round, crunchy fruit...what is it?"), 20 questions, finger plays and songs (for younger children) and sound games (I'm thinking of an animal that starts with the "p" sound **MAKE SURE TO SAY THE SOUND AND NOT THE LETTER NAME**).
- Sensorimotor play at the beach with sand, water, balls, bubbles and kites. These are great ways to keep your child moving!
- Be sure to take photographs of before, during and after your trip. When you get home, have the child sequence the pictures and make a story book writing sentences (or dictating) about each picture.