

Play Room Guidelines and Parent Role in Filial Therapy

Filial therapy is a therapeutic family intervention in which the therapist educates, teaches, and co-facilitates with parents. The therapist and parents are engaged as partners in the therapeutic process through child-centered play sessions with their children. Play is a child's way to make meaning of confusing and frightening events. Children can use play to self-soothe and gain control in chaotic times. They can practice new behaviors and try out ways of speaking out. A secure attachment system is supported during play together. Parents are empowered to be the primary change agents for their children. Parent and child will learn the value of healthy boundaries in a therapeutic setting.

- Hand sanitizer will be used at the beginning and end of every session.
- Cell phones are turned off and put away. One of the goals of Filial Therapy is for the child to be heard and understood by their parents (Van Fleet, 1994). Checking phone messages or conducting business is not appropriate in the play session.
- Outside food/drinks are not allowed. A best practice for children coming from school is to have a snack ready when you pick them up so that they can eat on the way to their session.
- We will follow the child's lead. How and what your child wants to play is the direction of every activity. Play is at the child's level. Parents support and participate, but the child directs his own path. This involves allowing the child to decide the structure and materials involved in play time. We don't make suggestions, critique or edit any activity.
- Children's social behavior is allowed to be whatever it is as long as everyone is safe. Children can be messy, loud and rambunctious, which is acceptable in the playroom. However, children are not allowed to throw toys at others or tease or hurt the service dog. Dr. Myers will set limits in the play room.
- Parents are encouraged to listen, observe, and wonder. Posing questions and interrupting the child's play can limit and change the direction of play, which defeats our purpose. We are learning the skills of careful observation and reflective listening. Communication and limit setting are modeled and practiced.
- During our play session, two practices to avoid are the persistent use of the words "Be careful" and/or asking the question "Why?".
- Children are never responsible for clean-up. Clean-up is performed by Dr. Myers, who uses this practice to understand and experience more fully what the child's play was like for him/her. It also imparts an unspoken message to the child that they are seen, important and understood.