



Child Centered Play Therapy - International

Tracking Behavior (Reflecting Non-Verbal Behavior)

Definition: "The play therapist responds verbally to the child's actions by stating what is seen or observed." (Ray et al., 2017)

Examples:

- "You are moving that over there."
- "You're using that one."
- "That one is moving really quickly."
- "You're painting the top part with big movements."

Connection to Theory (Rogers' six conditions; Rogers, 1957):

- Psychological contact – Verbal responses to the child's actions can help establish and maintain contact sending the message that the therapist is fully present with the child
- Empathic understanding – Stating what the child is doing can help communicate the therapist's understanding of the client's experience
- Unconditional positive regard
 - Reflecting behaviors about which the child may feel shame in an accepting way can help decrease conditions of worth
 - Reflecting both those behaviors which the child considers positive and those which the child considers more negative without a significant change in therapist affect can communicate that behavior does not change the child's acceptability as a person.
- Genuineness - When tracking appears as rote responses to behavior, children may experience reflecting non-verbal behavior as inauthentic, coming across as awkward or scrutinizing.

Developmental considerations

- Children in Piaget's pre-operational stage of cognitive development (preschool and early school age) often respond well to more frequent reflection of non-verbal behavior due to their normal egocentrism at this age.
- Tracking is used less frequently with pre-teens and teens because they are more likely to interpret responses to non-verbal behavior as scrutiny due to their sense that everyone is watching their every move.

Resources

- Landreth, G. L. (2023). *Play therapy: The art of the relationship* (4th ed.). Brunner-Routledge.
- Ray, D. C. (2011). *Advanced play therapy: Essential conditions, knowledge, and skills for child practice*. Routledge.
- Ray, D. C., Purswell, K., Haas, S., & Aldrete, C. (2017). Child-Centered Play Therapy-Research Integrity Checklist: Development, reliability, and use. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 26(4), 207-217. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pla0000046>
- Rogers, C. R. (1957). The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 21(2), 96-103.