
Book Reviews

Deep Play: Exploring the Use of Depth in Psychotherapy with Children

Dennis McCarthy, ed.

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Dennis McCarthy states that to be an effective child psychotherapist, one needs to be a philosopher, an archaeologist, and a seeker. McCarthy accomplishes all three in his edited book, *Deep Play: Exploring the Use of Depth in Psychotherapy with Children*, by bringing together a wide range of seasoned child psychotherapists who predominately use play, sand play, drawings, clay, and water in their clinical work with children. Unique to the contributors is that six of the ten authors are male, an unusual phenomena in a branch of psychotherapy that is heavily dominated by women.

At first glance, the title of McCarthy's book, *Deep Play*, may appear simple, however it is in the paradoxical world of play therapy that complexity exists. Immediately the reader is taken deeper into the

serious business of play in psychotherapy. The process is complex and profound and each therapist raises nuanced questions that interact, intersect, and shift according to the various contexts in which children and families find themselves. The reader is given a unique opportunity to understand the power of play whereby children make meaning of difficult situations and emotions that might be too difficult to describe in words alone.

Shaun McNiff's forward to the book primes readers for the privilege of entering the play space typically reserved for only the child and the therapist. Next, each chapter examines an original case study described by different therapists from a range of theoretical orientations. Many therapists appear to use Jungian therapy, although there are also orientations of Theraplay and child-centered approaches. Although the majority of chapters focus on individual play therapy, McCarthy includes a few chapters covering family therapy, adult therapy, and long-term therapy. Each author invites the reader to join in the philosophical conceptualization of the case, including how the client

came to the therapy experience. Next, each author digs deeper into the narrative of the child's experience, carefully titrating how quickly or slowly to proceed over sessions. The reader bears witness not only to the child's process but also to the rare experience of what the therapist is thinking. The reader metaphorically sits alongside the therapist as a fellow sojourner to the process, accompanied by many images of sand works or other art created by the children. As the chapters progress, readers soon realize each child, family, and therapist is manifesting the play process in many distinctive forms, yet similarities also emerge. These similarities present as intersections of each therapist's philosophical musings with skillful facilitation that results in holding the child's pain while also seeking hope, growth, and change.

What distinguishes this book from others is the quest to go "deeper" into the "ever-present" moment of play which is a very sensorial experience. Examples include chapters that explore the use of deep sandboxes instead of shallow ones, wet sand in place of dry sand, tunnel and cave imagery in the sand, metaphorical digging and hiding, and aggressive play, including pounding with bataka (or padded foam) bats. As one reads through the different case studies, common themes emerge: respect for children, respect for the power of play as an agent of change, and the ability to use play as unification.

Just as an archaeologist carefully, slowly, and skillfully descends into unfamiliar territory, the contributing authors are each comfortable with not knowing where the deepness will take them. This trust in the psychotherapeutic process is an important skill and constructive

reminder for experienced therapists. For the novice therapist, this reassuring comfort with ambivalence models how other therapists interpret, wonder, and remain curious throughout the therapy. In an era of short-term treatment and a desire for fast solutions, I find McCarthy's respect of children's need for time and space in the language of play quite refreshing.

McCarthy refers to play as a "paradox" in psychotherapy with children. Indeed, the interpersonal process that occurs over time is full of paradoxes and polarities. *Deep Play* illustrates how playing at the edges of scary stories and fear, real or imagined, children and adults learn to tolerate discomforts and move around or through the pain of emotional distress. It is in this paradox that McCarthy and his contributing authors situate themselves. If the reader wants to understand psychotherapy with creative play and art mediums through the eyes and thoughts of a therapist, *Deep Play* will be an important contribution to that learning. McCarthy has indeed brought together therapists who can play "philosopher, archaeologist, and seeker" by understanding that children's play is their natural form of expression and that therefore their play must be encouraged, understood, and valued.

—Mary Anne Peabody, *University of Southern Maine: Lewiston-Auburn College, Lewiston, ME*

Princess Cultures: Mediating Girls' Imaginations and Identities

Miriam Forman-Brunell and Rebecca C. Hains, eds.