

## Why Play Therapy?

Young children frequently have difficulty talking about what is bothering them. This is not because they don't want to discuss their thoughts and feelings, but because they haven't yet developed the vocabulary or thinking skills that they need in order to be able to do this.

Play therapy is an approach to counseling children that allows them to use toys and other play and art materials to express their thoughts and feelings. In a play session, children can use their play to show the counselor what they are thinking and feeling. The counselor can then use the play to communicate with children about what is happening in their lives and to help them explore alternative behaviors and communications.

Terry Kottman, Ph. D., RPT-S, LMHC, NCC

“An Explanation of Play Therapy”

- “Play therapy” is a general term
- Many different theoretically-based types of play therapy
- Play Therapy (1947, rev. 1969), Virginia M. Axline

Discuss principles



Partners in Play (1995) Terry Kottman

What is different about Adlerian play therapy?

Basis of Adlerian (individual) psychology

Phases of Adlerian treatment:

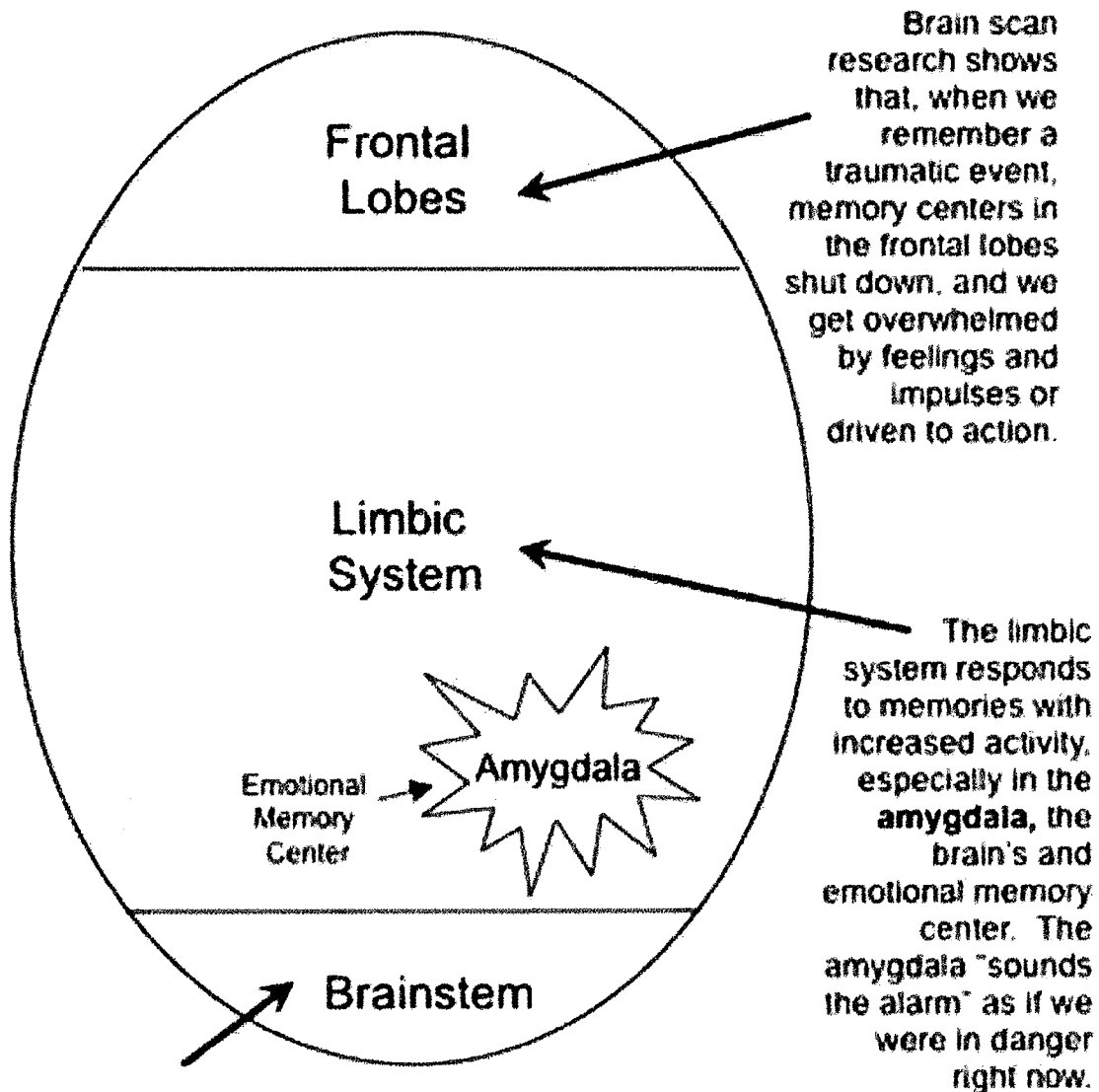
- Building an egalitarian relationship
- Exploration of child's lifestyle
- Helping child gain insight into lifestyle
- Reorientation/Reeducation

First phases are more child-directed, building the team partnership, allowing therapist to be directive as well.

- Why do I like this approach?  
Includes concepts about the individual operating in a social field; connectedness to others, etc. that are congruent with my training in systems theory and family therapy.  
Fits my personality – I want to have an active part in the therapy as well.
- Importance of relationship
- Importance of reflecting feelings (assisting child with emotional development, assisting them to develop a healthy “schema” for making sense of their experiences).

# We remember trauma less in words and more with our feelings and our bodies

(van der Kolk & Fisler, 1995)



Brain scan research shows that, when we remember a traumatic event, memory centers in the frontal lobes shut down, and we get overwhelmed by feelings and impulses or driven to action.

The limbic system responds to memories with increased activity, especially in the **amygdala**, the brain's and emotional memory center. The amygdala "sounds the alarm" as if we were in danger right now.

The reptilian brain reacts instinctively to the amygdala's "alarm." Heart rate increases. We stop breathing or hyperventilate. Muscles tense. We either speed up or shut down.