

CCPT

Child-centered play therapy (CCPT) is an approach to Person-centered Counseling that effectively blends Rogerian tenets with the natural way children communicate through play. The three core elements of Person-centered therapy are congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathy. Axline (1947) expanded the use of these concepts to the treatment of children through child-centered play therapy. Axline writes that “play is the child’s natural medium of self-expression” (1969, p. 9) providing children with a therapeutic relationship developed in a setting of acceptance, caring and empathy facilitates trust and provides the child with a safe place to explore their emotions.

Axline (1969) developed eight principles to be used to guide the CCPT process. These principles involved the therapist attending to the following:

- Develop a warm, friendly rapport with the child as soon as possible.
- Accept the child just as they are.
- Allow the child to express themselves freely and completely by establishing a sense of permissiveness.
- Recognize the feelings the child expresses and reflects those them back to the client in a way that allows the client to gain insight into his/her own behavior.
- Maintain and communicate a deep respect for the child’s ability to solve problems, make choices, and institute change.
- Allow the child to lead the way in all aspects of therapy, refraining from directing the child’s play in any way.
- Allow the therapy process to develop at its natural pace without being hurried in any way.
- Establish limitations only when necessary to anchor the therapy to reality and with therapeutic benefit that provides insight into the child’s aware of his/her responsibility in the relationship.

While child-centered play therapy efforts may be challenged by economic or circumstantial hardships, it is the responsibility and burden of the child-centered play therapist to identify ways to continue to support the growth and development of children by using their play as the most valued form of their self-expression.

While this process ideally occurs in a carefully appointed play therapy room with a

specifically curated toy selection, the universal Rogerian therapeutic factors (i.e., congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathy) can be applied anywhere, anytime, with anybody! The child-centered play therapists maintains this posture, knowing that they will positively impact children by genuinely prizing them throughout their play process.

References

Association for Play Therapy. (n.d.). Mental Health Professionals Applying the Power of Play. Retrieved August 16, 2020, from <https://www.a4pt.org/page/WhyPlayTherapy>