

UTAH PLAYS

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Our New President's Message

By Debbie Morrison, PhD, LCSW, MT-BC

Debra Olson-Morrison, PhD, LCSW, MT-BC
After much work, the new website (utahplaytherapy.com) is finally up and running. Although many parts are still under construction (thanks for your patience), we are hoping to make this site more user-friendly to you. We will be posting all trainings and events on-line, and we encourage you to use this system to register. You now have the option of paying at time of registration with a credit card through Paypal, or you may elect to register at the door. As in the past, you can also register with Ryan Grant. Under the Board Members section, we posted pictures of each member as well as brief bios. Now that you know what we look like, please come and introduce yourselves to us at trainings! Lastly, we still have a functioning bulletin board. This page serves as a community resource to you, and serves to advertise services, office space, etc. To post information on this bulletin board, please email me! If you have any suggestions for improvements to the website, please don't hesitate to let myself or one of the board members know. One last word, if you or someone you know specializes in play therapy or topics related to play therapy, please consider providing a training for our members. Contact our training coordinator, Dustin Bassett at theconnectingplace@gmail.com. Have a happy holiday season and we will see you in 2010!

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Report on Recent Wonderful Training

John Burr, LCSW, RPT-S and Valerie Cox, LCSW did a masterful job in training us on how to employ play therapy and sand tray to promote healing in a family where sexual abuse had taken place. We learned so much about sand tray and appreciate John and Valerie and especially the family for sharing their story with us.

Expressive art was also used as a treatment for this family. Several useful examples of interventions were explained.

Thank You!



NOTES ON THE NATIONAL APT CONFERENCE: ATLANTA, GA

By Larry Dunning

Arriving at the conference hotel (Renaissance Waverly) on Thursday night, I was able to enjoy the opening reception. The food was really good, but, unfortunately, ran out way too soon.

I was able to attend the Friday morning General Session, at which Daniel Sweeney, the current APT president was introduced. For this session, the Keynote Address was given by Eliana Gil. Her message was entitled "Why Play Therapy? Why APT?" During her address, she presented information about herself and how her life events have fostered her interest in play therapy, and post-trauma play in particulars.

At age 8, she was involved in a fiery plane crash in her native country of Ecuador. Fewer than half of the passengers survived the crash. After this experience, she immersed herself in post-trauma play (without realizing, of course, that that's what she was doing), consisting of re-enacting various types of accidents, rescuing, burying people, as well as setting fires at home.

When she was 11, she experienced a massive earthquake, again in Ecuador. Her post-traumatic play then involved crashing houses of cards. At age 12, her parents separated and eventually divorced. In her subsequent play, she drew families together in houses, and drew lots of brides and grooms. Without realizing what was happening, she was becoming an expert, through direct experience, in post-traumatic play.

Her first job was as a secretary, where, coincidentally, she filed photos of plane crashes, and, as a result, was re-traumatized. For her second job, she worked as a secretary to the renown family therapist Murray Bowen, and "fell in love with family systems."

NOTES ON THE NATIONAL APT CONFERENCE (continued)

In concluding her address, she provided a rationale for “Why Play Therapy?” Play therapy:

- Is comforting and nurturing to the child
- Allows the child to:
 - Show what’s going on inside: s/he doesn’t have to tell it
 - Be an active participant in (traumatizing) event and re-engage with the event in a safe way
 - Physically rebuild things that are lost/destroyed
 - Compensate for losses:
 - e.g., daddy going to jail: can have pretend meal with him
 - Overcome hardships through playing them out with a different ending
 - Establish relationships with others through imaginal bonding and controlled interactions (safe way to interact with “angry mommy”)
 - Regulate emotions
 - Process life events

In closing, she summed up her involvement over a lifetime with play therapy: “I have been given a gift, privilege, and responsibility.” Not coincidentally, later in the week, Eliana was presented with the APT Lifetime Achievement Award. During the same awards ceremony, Utah was presented with the Gold Branch Award for exceeding the basic requirements of chapter membership in APT.

One of the sessions I attended during the week was a co-presentation by Kevin O’Connor, Terry Kottman, and Susan Bundy-Myrow, who presented in turn on Ecosystemic play therapy, Adlerian play therapy, and Theraplay.

During a break, I mentioned to Terry Kottman that I would be looking forward to her visiting Utah in September of 2010. And indeed, Terry Kottman is coming to Utah next year to present at UAPT’s semi-annual two-day conference. She will present on topics related to Adlerian Play Therapy. You will love her as a presenter. She’s funny, active, informative, consistent in her approach to play therapy based on Adlerian principles, and passionate about play therapy.

