STEP BY STEP COUNSELING

Play Therapy FAQ

GENERAL COMMUNITY

What is play therapy? Play therapy is a way for children to work through feelings, experiences, and challenges using play — their natural language. A trained therapist uses toys, games, and creative activities to help kids express what's hard to say with words.	**Isn't play therapy just playing?** It might look like regular play, but it's actually a carefully planned process. Every toy, activity, and interaction is chosen to help the child work on emotional, social, or behavioral goals.	**Who can benefit from play therapy?** Children dealing with big changes (like divorce or moving), hard feelings (like anxiety or sadness), behavioral struggles, bullying, grief, trauma, or difficulty getting along with others often benefit.
What age is play therapy for? It's most common for ages 3-12, but it can be adapted for teens, and even for families to participate together.	**Does the therapist tell parents what the child says?** Not exactly. Just like adult counseling, kids have privacy in therapy. The therapist shares general updates about progress and skills learned, but not every detail of what happens in the playroom, unless there's a safety concern.	**Can play therapy help with behavior problems?** Yes. Often, behavior is a way of communicating feelings or needs. Play therapy helps kids understand and manage their emotions, which usually improves behavior.
How long does play therapy take to work? It depends on the child and their situation. Some kids make progress in a few months, while others need longer. Healing and growth happen at the child's pace.	**Do parents participate in play therapy?** Often, yes. Parents may be invited into some sessions, learn skills to support their child at home, and receive feedback on how to help outside of therapy.	**What kinds of toys are used in play therapy?** Playrooms often include dolls, art supplies, sand trays, building toys, puppets, and role-play items. Each type of toy serves a purpose — for example, art can help with self-expression, and building toys can build problem-solving skills.
Can play therapy help kids who have been through trauma? Yes. It gives children a safe space to express what happened, rebuild trust, and learn ways to cope without having to put everything into words right away.	**Does my child need to be good at talking to benefit from play therapy?** No. Play therapy is especially helpful for kids who find talking about their feelings hard or uncomfortable.	**How is play therapy different from counseling at school?** School counseling is usually short-term and focused on school-related issues. Play therapy in the community can go deeper and last longer, focusing on overall emotional health.
How do I know if my child needs play therapy? If your child's behavior, mood, or relationships have changed in ways that concern you — or if they've been through something stressful or upsetting — it's worth reaching out to a play therapist for a consultation.	**Does insurance cover play therapy?** In most cases, yes. It is billed as mental health counseling, though coverage depends on your plan.	**How do I find a qualified play therapist?** Look for someone who is a licensed mental health professional with specific training in play therapy. The Association for Play Therapy website has a directory of Registered Play Therapists (RPTs).