



Dr Candice Leith
Counselling Psychologist

Supporting Every Mind,
Every Journey

PLAY THERAPY INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS

Play Therapy is a therapeutic approach where children communicate and process their emotions, thoughts, and experiences through play. Since play is the primary language of children, it allows them to express what might be difficult to articulate with words. In play therapy **toys serve as a child's words, and play is their language**. In play therapy, children not only express their thoughts and feelings but also learn to manage their emotions in constructive ways, make decisions, and take responsibility for their actions.

Confidentiality in play therapy:

Play therapy, like other forms of therapy, is built on the foundation of confidentiality. Just as with adult therapy, the child's privacy and trust are of utmost importance. Here's how this works:

- **Confidentiality of the Session:** What happens during a play therapy session is confidential. This means I cannot share specific details about what your child does or says in the playroom. The therapeutic process relies on a safe, private environment where the child can express themselves freely without concern that their words or actions will be shared with others.
- **What I Can Share:** While I cannot share specific details, I am happy to provide general impressions or observations that might help you understand your child's progress. I can offer suggestions or strategies to help support your child's emotional development at home. This may include general insights into what the child is expressing through their play and how it can inform their emotional growth.
- **When I Can Share Information:** There are times when it might be important for me to share information with you, particularly if I believe it will help your child or if there are concerns about safety. If this happens, I will ensure you're aware of what is being shared, and we will discuss it together. If you have specific concerns or questions, feel free to ask, and I can provide feedback based on general observations or recommendations that align with your child's development and therapy goals.

Scheduled feedback sessions:

Instead of giving feedback in front of the child, we will have **scheduled feedback sessions every 5 sessions** where we can discuss your child's progress and any insights from the therapy. These sessions are meant to be a private time for you and I to:

1. **Share General Observations:** I will provide you with observations about your child's emotional processing, their behaviour during the sessions, and any growth or challenges they may be facing.

2. **Discuss Strategies for Support:** You'll receive tailored suggestions for how to support your child at home, based on the progress they are making in therapy.
3. **Answer Any Questions or Concerns:** You'll have the chance to ask any questions you may have and discuss concerns about your child's development, both in therapy and at home.
4. **If you have concerns before feedback session:** You are welcome to contact me via cell or email. We will arrange an earlier session.

How to Prepare Your Child for Play Therapy:

Preparing your child for play therapy can help them feel more comfortable and less anxious about the experience. Here are some simple and supportive ways to explain the therapy process:

1. Keep the Explanation Short and Simple

- You can say something like:
 - *"You're going to see Candi in her special playroom every week. There are lots of toys you can play with."*
 - This keeps the explanation straightforward, focusing on the fun and safe environment without overwhelming the child with details.

2. Addressing Any Questions About Why They Are Going

- If your child asks **why they are going to the playroom**, you can give a gentle, general explanation like:
 - *"Things don't seem to be going very well at school or at home right now, and sometimes we need a special playtime with a special person to help you feel better."*
 - This helps frame the therapy as a supportive and positive experience without giving too many details that could create confusion or fear. It also normalizes the need for help, making it feel less like something to worry about.

3. Keep the Tone Calm and Reassuring

- It's important to speak about therapy in a **positive, neutral tone**. Avoid using language that could make the experience seem scary or negative, like "fix" or "problem."
- Reassure your child that **therapy is a safe place** for them to explore their feelings and express themselves freely through play.

When Your Child First Comes to the Playroom:

The first visit to the playroom can sometimes be a bit daunting for children, as it's a new environment with a new person. It's normal for children to feel **anxious or unsure** during their first session. Here's what you can expect, and how you can help ease the transition:

1. Introducing Yourself and the Therapist

- When I greet you and your child, I will introduce myself in a calm and friendly manner:
"Hi, my name is Candi. We can go to the playroom now."
- This helps create a smooth and welcoming transition into the therapy space.

2. How You Can Support Your Child

- It's helpful if you reassure your child by saying something like:
"I'll wait here, and I'll be here when you're finished in the playroom."
 - This reinforces that you're nearby and that they are not being left alone.
- **Avoid Saying "Bye":**
 - Saying "goodbye" can sometimes make children feel anxious, as it may imply you're leaving for a long time. Instead, keeping the tone positive and neutral, like the suggestion above, will help your child feel safe and secure about the transition.

3. What to Avoid Saying

- **Do Not Say "Be Nice" or "Behave":**
 - While it's natural to want your child to behave well, it's best to avoid directing comments like "be nice" or "behave." These can create unnecessary pressure and distract from the child's ability to freely express themselves in the playroom.
 - Play therapy is a space for your child to express themselves freely, and I will work with them in a calm, patient manner to help them feel comfortable and understood.

4. My Approach to Your Child's Behaviour

- I will **unconditionally accept your child's behaviour** during the session. This means that I will meet your child where they are emotionally, whether they are hesitant, excited, or unsure. If your child shows reluctance to enter the playroom or begins to feel overwhelmed, I will be patient and understanding.
- It's important for you to know that **there is no right or wrong behaviour** in play therapy. The goal is for your child to feel safe enough to express whatever they're feeling through play, whether it's curiosity, fear, excitement, or even frustration.

In the Therapy Session:

- I will introduce the playroom to child, I will also explain session length by saying, "We will have 50 minutes together in the playroom. At the end of our time, we'll use the last few minutes to clean up, and I'll remind you when we have about 5 minutes left so you know when it's time to finish." (This helps the child feel prepared for the end of the session without any surprises.)
- I will tell the child the number of sessions we will have together. "We'll have __ sessions together, and each time we meet, you'll have a chance to play and share whatever you want. It's a special time just for you." (This sets the expectation for the length of the therapy process, giving the child a clear idea of how many sessions they can look forward to).
- It's important to prepare for the possibility that, while you're waiting, you may hear loud noises, crying, or expressions of anger coming from the therapy room. This is completely normal and does not mean something is wrong.

What to Do After the Session:

After a play therapy session, it's important to be patient and allow your child to process their feelings and experiences. Because young children may not yet have the language or awareness to articulate what they've been working through, their responses will likely be simple, such as "I played." The goal of play therapy is to help children process emotions, not necessarily to recount

specific events, so asking too many questions about the session could put unnecessary pressure on your child.

Here's how you can support your child after the session:

1. Keep the Post-Session Interaction Simple

- **When you greet your child after the session**, avoid asking things like, **"Did you have fun?"**
Instead, keep it simple and neutral:
 - *"Hi, we can go home now."*
 - This approach reassures your child without putting pressure on them to explain what happened or to assess their feelings immediately.

2. Avoid Specific Questions Right After the Session

- **Refrain from asking detailed questions in the car or immediately after the session**, such as:
 - *"What did you do today?"*
 - *"Did you have fun?"*
 - *"What did you talk about?"*
- These types of questions can unintentionally pressure your child to come up with an answer when they may not have the words or emotional clarity to share. They may simply answer, *"I played,"* and that's perfectly okay. The goal is to **give them space** to process their emotions without pushing for a detailed explanation.

3. Praise in a Non-Pressuring Way

- **If your child brings home a drawing or any creative work**, it's important to avoid praising it in a way that might make them feel they need to "perform" or produce more. For example, avoid saying, **"Wow, that's great! You should make more like that!"**
- Instead, make **observations about what you see** in a calm and curious way:
 - *"You used lots of colours—blue, green, and red—all the way down the page!"*
- This approach focuses on the **process** rather than the product and reinforces that it's okay for the child to express themselves without feeling the need to constantly meet expectations.

4. Give Space for Natural Reflection

- If your child chooses to talk about the session, let them share at their own pace. You can validate their experience by simply listening and providing a calm response like:
 - *"That sounds interesting. I'm glad you had a chance to play."*
- By allowing your child to open up naturally, you help them build confidence in expressing their feelings, without feeling forced to talk about it right away.

Please note: If your child is unwell, please reschedule the session with me. Therapy requires a lot of emotional energy and focus, and your child will not benefit fully if they are not feeling well.



📞 076 4001 101

✉️ psychologist@drcandileith.com

Practice No.: 0494356

HPCSA Reg: PS 0121002

📍 Crossfit Ballito,
Grace Family Church R102,
Compensation Ballito, 4399