

# Play Therapy in Integrated Behavioral Health

Presented by Alix Zamansky, LICSW



"For children, toys are a means of communication, and play is the process of telling the story of their inner lives"



# Objectives

- What is Play Therapy?
- Incorporating Play Therapy into Integrated Care
- Q & A





Has anyone used play in  
their work before?



# Play is a Child's First Language

Through play a child can learn:

- Mastery of Feeling Identification and Emotion Regulation
- Problem Solving and Choice Making
- Boundaries
- “Right Brain” Learning
- Exploration of Attachment/Attunement



# Child-Centered Trauma-Informed Play



"Deep listening to suffering is a source of peace,  
[a] way to change the world"

- Follow child's lead
- Clinician respects, reflects, records
- Distinguish feelings from behaviors  
& provide container for feelings
- Types of responses:
  - Reflecting feelings
  - Esteem building
  - Therapeutic limit setting
- Balance facilitating trauma narrative  
AND creating narrative of safety







# Themes that May Emerge:

- ◉ Power/Control
- ◉ Anger/Aggression
- ◉ Protection/Safety
- ◉ Fear/Helplessness
- ◉ Trust/Relationships
- ◉ Rejection/Abandonment
- ◉ Nurturing Security
- ◉ Loneliness/Sadness

What is not play therapy...

- ◉ Board Games
- ◉ Arts & Crafts
- ◉ Bibliotherapy

(that doesn't mean we don't use these in the play space)







# What is in the SBCHC Play Space? (WHY...?)

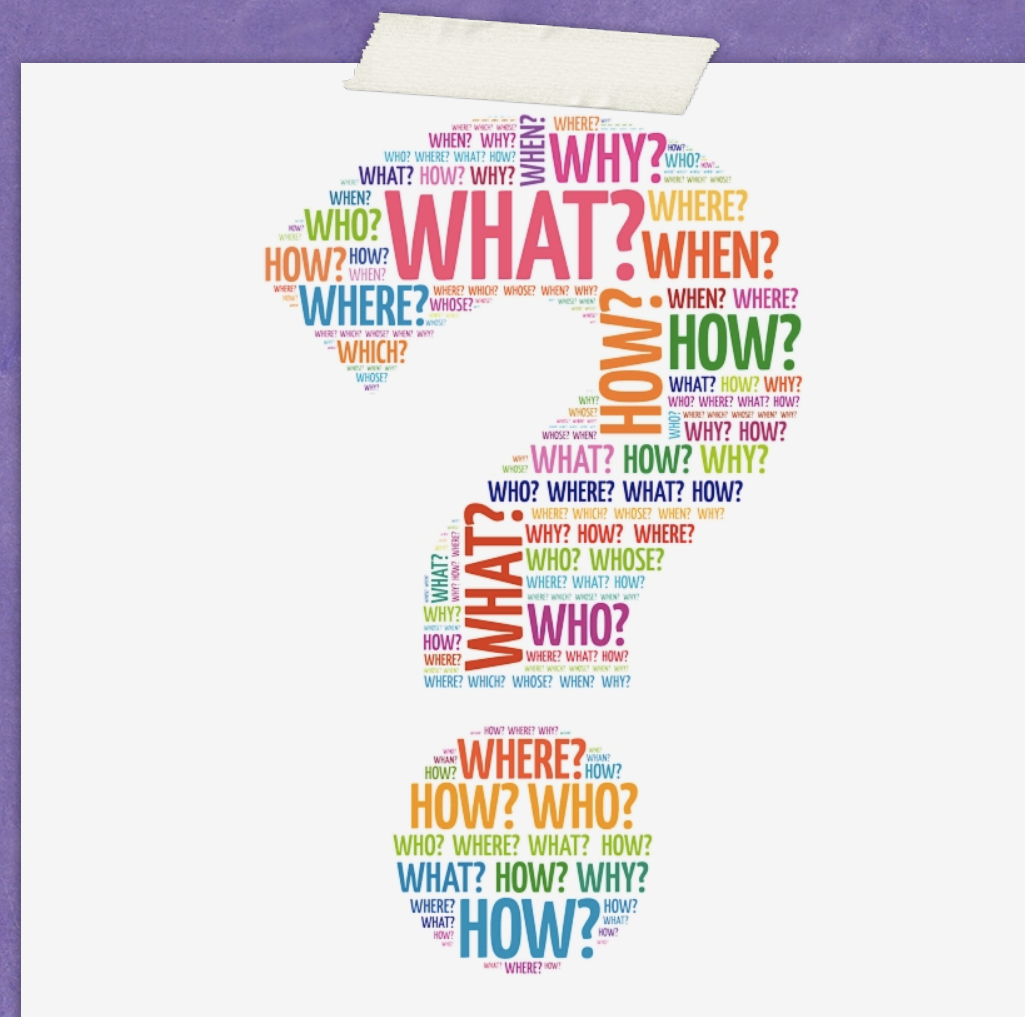
## PLAY THERAPY MATERIALS

- Medical Kit
- Food and Dishes
- Baby dolls
- 2 pretend cell phones
- Doll family
- Doll furniture
- Doll house
- Crayons, Colored Pencils, Markers, Paper, Scissors, Glue
- Sensory ball
- Duplo with fire truck, police car, and bus
- Lego (without people)
- Bag of baby/toddler blocks/dolls





So, what does this look like in integrated care?





# Uses of Play Therapy in Integrated Setting

- Assessment
- Brief intervention
  - Individual
  - Dyad/Sibling/Family
- Brief Case Example: A
- Findings of Marshall & DeMarie (2021)



Q & A



# References:

- Linda B. Hunter, Ph.D RPT-S 2004
- Marshall, L. & DeMarie, D. (2021). Integration of Play Therapy in medical settings: Understanding the link between mental health and medical health. *Association for Play Therapy*, 3(30),167-176.