

**What is Play Therapy?** How does it help a young child work through a difficult experience? Liz Gregory, a Child and Family Therapist at The Hope Connection specializes in Play Therapy and applies this child centered intervention to her work with children ages 3-11. "My passion is to work with children and assist them with developing the skills they need now, at a young age, so they can apply those coping skills and problem solving techniques all through their lives and whenever they encounter a difficult situation."

- "Play is the child's language, and the toys are their words" (Landreth, 2002). Years of studies have been done that show evidence that Play Therapy is one of the most natural self-healing methods for children.
- Therapists utilize Play Therapy to assist children with what is troubling them when they do not have the verbal capabilities to express their feelings and thoughts.
- Through Play Therapy, children learn how to be empowered, to communicate with others, express feelings, modify behavior, learn respect for self and other, develop problem-solving skills and learn a variety of ways of relating to others. (APT, 2015).
- Children are seen in therapy for a variety of reasons, such as behavioral, emotional, social and learning problems as well as struggles related to life events such as death, illness, divorce, bullying, abuse, crisis, trauma, depression and anxiety.

**Play Therapy** is as individualized as the child themselves. Each session lasts approximately 50 minutes in length, are held weekly and can take an average of 20 sessions to resolve a 'typical' problem a child might be referred for. Of course, more serious or ongoing problems may take longer to resolve. Families play an important role in the therapeutic healing process. When there is a cohesive team working together, both the child and family will heal faster. At a minimum, the therapist will want to stay in weekly communication with the caregivers to develop a treatment plan and monitor progress.

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