



BALANCING THE LEFT BRAIN & RIGHT BRAIN IN PLAY THERAPY

While we know the brain 🧠 is a bit more complicated, we're going to generalize a little here so stay with us

You might agree that play therapy is more of a *right-brain experience* ... When a child is playing, their right brain is actively engaged, and the sensations and emotions stored in their implicit and explicit memory circuitry arise into conscious awareness – this is the magic of play therapy! ❤️ It allows children to explore their internal world without having to access words.

While this is indeed beautiful, it can leave us scratching our heads 🤔 and wondering how to communicate to the child's caregivers, teachers and other adults involved in the child's life, *what just happened?!*

This is where the left-brain process comes in! ... to help us organize, make sense of, and communicate what is happening.



Here are a some tips to not get lost in a right brain process and communicate effectively so that the child's caregivers can clearly see the progress and transformation that is occurring

- 1 **Set clear age-appropriate goals** that clearly outline what you and the caregiver are looking for to know that change is occurring. *Ex. Stephen (age 5) will increase his ability to use his words when he gets frustrated. Demonstrated by Stephen asking for help when he gets frustrated, instead of hitting.*
- 2 **Identify the challenges for the child early** in the process AND exactly what you're looking for to indicate progress ("starting points" and "ending points") to help you recognize empowerment and transformation. *Ex. If a child client's play is filled with feelings and play demonstrating a perception of lack of safety and a need to stay hyper vigilant, then you will most likely be looking for play that involves safety and predictability to let you know transformation has occurred.*
- 3 **Help caregivers understand how the play is working** towards the outlined goals in each and every conversation - go back to what you're working on in your sessions and link them to the goals.
- 4 **Use visual handouts to explain the process.** For example, in Synergetic Play Therapy we show caregivers a diagram of what the play therapy process looks like during intake. This is a great way to make a right-brain experience feel more concrete (...and create a deeper level of understanding and buy-in from the caregiver).