



SPOTLIGHT ON PRACTICE

Child-Parent Psychotherapy®

Dyadic Play via Telehealth

I have a case with a 2-year-old female client that I opened during the pandemic. My biggest struggle was how to engage the child and her caregiver in virtual dyadic play sessions. Every time I observed the client virtually, she was running around, and I could not grab her attention. She did not know who I was, or what role I played on the screen.

I thought, *what if I bring the toys to their home, and ask her caregiver to use them during the session, and put them away until the next one?* So I went to the agency, grabbed some toys, and washed them. Before delivering the toys, I had a conversation with her caregiver. Once again, we discussed the meaning of the toys and CPP. I asked if she could put them away after the session, not because the child could not play with them, but because of what it means for their dyad and interaction. We also discussed how they could use any of the toys from the bag during their session, and can engage freely with the client without depending on instructions from me as a clinician. Her caregiver expressed how much she liked the idea, and agreed. I took the bag of toys to the home before the session, and used appropriate precautionary measures for COVID-19 in doing so.

For our first session with the toys, her caregiver had the bag ready. To my surprise, the client and her caregiver sat on the floor and engaged in dyadic play for 45 minutes. Her caregiver got teary-eyed and shared that since the child was placed in her care (7 months ago), this was the first time they sat on the floor and played together. She also said it's the first time she noticed that the client was focused and engaged. Their connection and engagement were delightful. This outcome inspired me to bring toys to my other clients as well. I had the same conversation with all caregivers, and they all liked the idea. The clients and their caregivers have responded very well.

For me, dyadic and CPP sessions had a huge turnaround after this breakthrough. They are happening as if I was in the home alongside them. Parents and children are more engaged; it feels like Child First again through a virtual platform.

-- Diana Alvarez, Child First Clinician
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