



The Wider Scope of Therapy

When we think of therapy, we often picture a traditional setting: a cozy room with a sofa where someone talks with a therapist. While traditional talk therapy is still an option, there are many more types of alternative therapies available today than in the past.

It can be tricky to navigate all the new therapy methods and determine which ones are effective. With so much information online, it's important to be cautious. If a therapeutic option seems too good to be true, makes big promises without evidence, or asks for payment before explaining how it works, it's wise to do further research before involving your child.

Types of Therapeutic Interventions

While we cannot provide you with a comprehensive list of all the therapeutic interventions available in this tip sheet (there are simply too many!), the following list identifies a few options for your consideration.

Sensory Integration Therapy: This therapy helps kids who have trouble processing sensory information —like feeling overwhelmed by certain textures or sounds. Sensory integration therapy uses activities and tools like textured toys or calming sounds to help children manage these sensations better. It's about making sense of the sensory world and guiding responses in a way that feels right for your child.

Music Therapy: Music therapy taps into the power of music to support emotional and cognitive development. Music can uplift moods and help with emotional expression, whether listening, creating, or singing. You can play favorite tunes together at home, but a certified music therapist can offer a personalized approach to help with mood, stress, and even recovery during medical treatments.

Pet/Animal Therapy: Pets offer unconditional love and comfort, and pet therapy takes this a step further by using trained therapy animals to provide emotional support. Pets can help reduce anxiety, build self-esteem, and offer companionship during tough times. For instance, a therapy dog might support a child undergoing medical treatment by providing comfort and motivation.

Equine/Horse Therapy: Working with horses can be an excellent way for kids to build confidence and learn new skills. The rhythmic motion of horseback riding improves balance and coordination while fostering trust and adaptability. A therapist and horse handler ensure safety and tailor the activities to your child's needs.

Ecotherapy: Spending time outdoors can refresh the spirit and improve mental well-being. Ecotherapy



1-800-762-8063
info@wifamilyconnectionscenter.org

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encourages kids to engage with nature—through hiking, gardening, or simply playing outside. Local parks often offer family-friendly activities, making outdoor time fun and therapeutic.

Art-Based Therapy (including Digital Art Therapy): Art Therapy uses creative activities like drawing, painting, or sculpting to help children express feelings and work through emotional challenges. It's a great way for kids to communicate and reflect on their emotions without needing words. Art therapists combine artistic techniques with psychological support to help children explore and manage their feelings. Digital Art Therapy allows children to create art using tablets or computers, offering a modern twist on creative expression. It provides new avenues for self-expression and emotional exploration, especially appealing to tech-savvy kids.

Movement Therapy: Movement therapy, including activities like dance, sports, or yoga, helps children connect with their bodies and express themselves physically. These activities can boost self-esteem, improve social skills, and help with emotional regulation. For kids who struggle with verbal expression, movement provides a valuable outlet for their feelings.

Mindfulness: Mindfulness practices such as deep breathing, visualization, and yoga help children focus on the present moment. They reduce anxiety, improve emotional regulation, and promote calm. Regular mindfulness practices can help kids and parents manage stress and foster a peaceful mind.

TBRI (Trust-Based Relational Intervention): TBRI is a therapeutic approach designed to support children who have experienced trauma, neglect, or abuse, especially those in foster care or adoptive settings. It focuses on building trust, empowering children with self-regulation skills, and guiding behavior through understanding and compassionate strategies. It helps create secure attachments and fosters emotional healing.

Play Therapy/Theraplay: Play therapy uses games and imaginative activities to help children express their feelings and work through challenges. Theraplay is a specific type of play therapy that focuses on enhancing the bond between parents and children through playful interactions, building trust, and emotional security.

Play-Based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): This approach combines traditional CBT techniques with play to help children understand and manage their thoughts and behaviors through games, storytelling, and role-playing. It makes CBT more engaging and accessible for younger kids who might struggle with conventional talk therapy.

Nutritional Approaches: Nutrition plays a crucial role in mental and physical health. A balanced diet with fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can significantly impact mood and behavior. If your child's diet is lacking, it might affect their mood or focus. Consulting with a pediatrician or nutritionist can help ensure your child's diet supports their overall well-being.

Virtual Reality (VR) Therapy: VR Therapy is an emergent therapy that uses immersive technology to create virtual worlds where kids can safely explore and practice new skills. For example, a child who fears heights might use VR to experience high places in a controlled environment. This approach can effectively treat fears, practice social skills, and manage stress through interactive scenarios.

Who Can I Turn to for Help?

When exploring new therapies for your child, consider talking to therapists, special education teachers, or social workers. They can offer valuable insights and guidance.

Connecting with other parents who have gone through similar experiences can also be incredibly helpful. They often share their “ah-ha” moments, advice on what worked, and recommendations for local professionals. Remember that every child is unique, so what works for one may not work for another.

Trust your instincts and take a gradual approach when trying new therapies. Introducing one new method at a time can help you see what works best for your child without overwhelming them with too many changes. Balancing new interventions with patience is vital, as too much change can make your child uncertain.

Remember, you’re not alone in this journey. We’re here to support you, and connecting with other parents or professionals can offer valuable guidance. Each child is unique, so finding the right approach might take some time. Moving forward slowly and thoughtfully, you can see what truly benefits your child while keeping their needs and well-being in mind.

Resources

From [the Resource Library](#)

- *Analyze This! – A Teen Guide to Therapy and Getting Help*, by Youth Communication
- *Some Bunny To Talk To: A Story About Going to Therapy*, by Cheryl Sterling
- *Creative Coping Skills for Children: Emotional Support Through Arts and Crafts Activities*, by Bonnie Thomas
- *Creative Expression Activities for Teens: Exploring Identity through Art, Craft, and Journaling*, by Bonnie Thomas
- *Ladybird's Remarkable Relaxation: How Children Can Use Yoga Relaxation to Help Deal with Stress, Grief, Bullying and Lack of Confidence*, by Michael Chissick

Tip Sheets

- [Uncovering Myths About Therapy](#)
- [Making the Most of Therapy for the Child in Your Care](#)

Training From [the Champion Classrooms](#)

- [About Wisconsin Wayfinder Children's Resource Network](#)
- [Youth and Mental Health](#)

Additional Resources

- [Types of Therapy](#) (please note that this list includes therapies for both adults and children)

Additional Music Therapy Resources

- [Five Ways Music Can Make You Healthier](#)
- [20 Surprising, Science-backed Health Benefits of Music](#)

Additional Sensory Integration Therapy/Occupational Therapy Resources

- [Sensory Integration: Tips to Consider](#)
- *Sensory Integration and the Child*, by A. Jean Ayres

Additional Pet/Animal Therapy Resources

- [American Hippotherapy Association](#)
- [Pet Partners](#)

Additional Ecotherapy Resources

- [Ecotherapy: How Does the Great Outdoors Improve Mental Health?](#)
- *Ecotherapy: Healing with Nature in Mind*, by Linda Buzzell and Craig Chalquist

Resources

Additional Art Therapy Resources

- [The American Art Therapy Association](#)

Additional Dance/Movement Therapy Resources

- [American Dance Therapy Association](#)

Additional Play Therapy Resources

- [Play Therapy Makes a Difference](#)
- [What is Theraplay?](#)

Additional Mindfulness Resources

- [Healthy Habits of Mind video](#)
- *Yoga Sprouts! Child & Caregiver Yoga Adventures*, by Katie Marie Muschlewski

Additional Play-Based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Therapy Resource

- [CBT Techniques: 25 Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Worksheets](#)

Additional Virtual Reality (VR) Therapy Resource

- *Virtual Reality Therapy for Anxiety: A Guide for Clinicians*, by Elizabeth McMahon & Brian T. O'Neill

Additional TBRI (Trust-Based Relational Intervention) Resource

- *The Connected Child: Bring Hope and Healing to Your Adoptive Family*, by Karyn B. Purvis, David R. Cross & Wendy Lyons Sunshine

Additional Cognitive-Behavioral Play Therapy Resource

- *Cognitive-Behavioral Play Therapy*, by Susan M. Knell