



SCAPT

A Communications Newsletter for South Carolina Play Therapists



Interventions for Online Therapy with Children and Youth

Written by Ariel Landrum, LMFT, ATR

In response to "flattening the curve" of the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus), many therapists, social workers, counselors, and others in the mental health field are taking their practices online. They have had to hurdle legal and ethical considerations, onboard new HIPAA compliant software, learn to troubleshoot, all while managing their emotions, and their client's fears around the pandemic. It has not been easy. But *treatment must go on*. So, many who work with children and youth are wondering, how do I do therapy online with them?

Below are a few you can use with children and youth**:

- **Simon Says:** Rules are simple. One person is designated as Simon, provides instructions to others, which they must obey. The other player/s lose if they follow a command that does not have the phrase "Simon Says" in the beginning. Both the therapist and the client take turns to be Simon. They can give directives like "Simon says stand up. Simon says, sit down. Stand up. Gotch-ya. " Simon didn't say." Simon Says is a tremendous therapeutic game to integrate the shifts of high-low arousal during higher brain functioning processing (paying attention and decision making when excited). Process with your client, or family, feelings of frustration around losing, and the excitement around "telling a grown-up what to do."



- **Charades:** A mimicry game where the intention is to guess the word or phrase that someone is acting out. The therapist can choose to take turns with the client or choose

either themselves or the client as the person acting out or guessing. Categories can be animals, sports, videogames, things in the sky, or professions. A therapist can send topics to the family beforehand, so the client has time to come up with some ideas. Use this game to process communication styles, interpretations of how something was acted out, and the concept of shorthand communication (including the shorthand they may unknowingly use with friends and family).



Save the Date!

The Fall 2020 Conference will be held on September 11-12, 2020.*** Sueann Kenney-Noziska will be the presenter. The topics are: **Play Therapy and Childhood Abuse and Trauma, and Play Therapy and Sexual Abuse.**

***At this time, plans are to meet in person at LRADAC in Columbia, SC.

Because so much is unknown about what the status of the state and COVID-19 will be in early September, contingency plans are being considered, and final decisions will be made in July.



- **I-Spy:** Individuals take turns trying to guess which nearby object was selected in secret, through description queues given by the selecting player. The therapist and client can choose a theme for the round (like colors, soft or hard objects, shapes, etc.). The game starts with a selected theme. The person who is "it" will spy something in that theme, saying, "I spy with my little eye (insert themed object)." The therapist must establish the rule that the object must be visible by the camera and that neither the therapist or the client can use themselves to block the object. This is a great game to improve language development as it reinforces vocabulary, and pro-social engagement, as the point is to help the other person guessing.

- **Going on a Picnic:** This game is perfect for communication building and **sequential cognitive connection**. Though it can be played with the therapist and the client, it has better therapeutic results with families. Using the ABC's as the framework, someone will begin the game with "I am going on a picnic, and I'm bringing (choose a food item that starts with an "A", like apple, artichokes, avocados, or a silly thing, like an astronaut or an airplane). The next person repeats what the first person said, and then adds another item (that starts with a "B"). Repeat this until the entire alphabet has been used. If someone forgets an item, then the round starts over. You can even create their picnic story into a digital book, with **My Storybook**. Discuss ways for the family to remember details (teaching supportive communication). Process frustrations when something was forgotten, and the game must start over, or potential sibling rivalry regarding the speed of memorization and gameplay.



- **Reading:** Any book can be read out loud. The therapist can let the family know before the session, so that the client can choose a book to read. The therapist can also choose to read books they have. Remember to show the page and images to the camera. If the therapist has a library card, they can also reserve a digital book online, screen share with the client (if their HIPAA compliant software allows this), and read together. *Protip, practice reading the book before meeting with the client so you can do voices for different characters.*



- **Coloring:** There are a variety of **free coloring pages** found online. Simply type "free coloring page" in Google. Choose some and send them to the family before the session so that they can download, print, and get the necessary coloring tools available. This is a good option for families that have crayons or other coloring media in the household. As an art therapist, there are a variety of ways to utilize coloring. Use this intervention to discuss with the client their choice of colors, decision making around what to color when, and their judgments or self-critic of their coloring work.

- **Worksheets:** There are a variety of **free worksheets** found online. Simply type "free therapy worksheets for kids" in Google. Choose some and send them to the family before the session so that they can download, print, and get the necessary materials to fill it out ready. This is a good option for families that have crayons and writing utensils at home. These items can be assigned as homework to bring into the next session. Focus on processing with the client the prompts and responses on their worksheets.

- **Videos:** If your software allows for screen sharing, share a mindfulness YouTube video, or other appropriate psychoeducation videos, in session. To maintain some control, it's better for the therapist to screen share and play the video, instead of the client. Allow the client to send a list of topics they want to learn more about, and research age-appropriate videos to play during the session. Sometimes, depending on the sensitive information in a video, send it to a parent/guardian for approval. Have the video cued up, with the ads already skipped, and any unnecessary intros already jumped. then mute the client, so there is no feedback, and they hear the video through their speakers and watch it on the shared screen. If a client needs to ask a question or say something, they communicate a pause. We use



a gesture we agreed upon for unmuting. At the end of each video, we process the client's reactions around the content. This is a list of videos that can be used in a session include:

- [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) from CDC](#)
- [Answering Kids' Questions About Coronavirus from CDC](#) (kids like this one because a kid is conducting the questions)
- [Be The Pond from Cosmic Kids Yoga](#)
- [Depression Explained from Professor Puppet](#)
- [What Causes Anxiety and Depression - Inside Out from Mind Set](#)
- [Preventing Childhood Anxiety and Depression from GoStrengths!](#)
- [A Student with Mental Illness from Chara Bui](#)
- [We Described Our Depression To An Illustrator from BuzzFeedVideo](#)

- [Do All Autistic People Think The Same from Jubilee](#)
- [6 Middle Schoolers Versus One Secret 5th Grader from Jubilee](#)
- [Do All Teen Moms Think The Same from Jubilee](#)
- [Do All Teen Dads Think The Same from Jubilee](#)
- [Do All Suicide Survivors Think The Same from Jubilee](#)

- **Show and Tell:** Show and tell is the practice of showing something of significance to someone and discussing it. Children **love** to show you their world. With online therapy, you have the chance to see their home, and particularly their room (if you were not doing home-based treatment). If the child's computer isn't directly plugged into the modem, have the child give you a tour of their room explaining what the different items are and their importance. Have the child show off an essential comfort/self-soothing item (like a teddy bear or blanket) and explain why it is comforting. Have them take you to various rooms in the house that are of importance. Have them share culturally significant items or rooms, like family heirlooms, religious items, or alters, and talk about what they mean to the family and the child. Some children even show me urns that contain loved-ones and share stories about them (this is great for grief processing work). This entire exercise is fantastic for rapport building.
- **Board Games At Home:** If the youth have board games, such as [Sorry](#) or [Candyland](#), you can have them set up the game and play the pieces for you. It's an excellent opportunity to discuss "being a helper" and diversity. Process what it is like to assist someone who isn't able to touch or interact with the objects physically. This opens the conversation around experience with individuals with disabilities, and now social distancing to help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 (coronavirus). This also allows the therapist to challenge the temptation to cheat. A therapist can choose to use their own gameboards, and have the client describe which pieces to move.
- **Feeling Faces:** Discuss feelings using feelings flashcards that have faces on them (create some with emojis, which the youth love). Show a face on the screen and have the youth label the feeling. Then try to have the youth make the same face. This creates emotional recognition and mirroring emotional states, which increases empathy. Try to include somewhat goofy faces that are hard to replicate or animal faces (like a pig), as this makes it more challenging and fun for children. You can even send the flashcards to the family to print out, so the youth can choose feeling faces for you to identify and imitate.

There are also free printable flashcards with question prompts around emoji feeling faces that can also be used.



- **Whiteboard or Jamboard:** In in-person therapy, therapists often use a whiteboard or a dry-erase board for psychoeducation, or interventions such as tandem drawing. GSuite allows an interactive whiteboard, through a program called **Jamboard**. Some HIPAA compliant videoconferencing software includes the use of a whiteboard, such as **Zoom Healthcare** and **TheraPlatform**. Create a Jamboard session, share the private link with the client, and we work on the board together, or they work on it by themselves. For art therapy, use the **bridge assessment/intervention**, along with **motivational interviewing**, to help address challenges the youth faces. Draw a line down the middle of the board, or create circles around the board, to represent boundaries that the youth and therapist have to honor. There is also a cognitive processing exercise to use with a child where you take turns drawing a line until there is a created picture. Lastly, with Jamboard specifically, a coloring image page can be imported to color together using the pen tool.
- **Puppets:** One advantage to not being in-front of the client, and instead online, is that puppetry is easier! Young children especially love seeing puppets on screen. Puppets can add humor and levity to a session. Inform the parent/guardian before session that you'll be puppeteering, so they can be in the room to help the young client, depending on their age. If they aren't participating in the session, they can sit in the room with headphones and stream something. For slightly older clients (6 to 7), the parent doesn't have to be in the room. Have a story prepared to tell the client, tell jokes, or discuss feelings and where they are felt in the body. Keeping the experience non-directive can also be used to encourage imaginative thinking, autonomy, and free expression.
- **Podcasts:** If your software allows for screen sharing, share topics from Podcasts that are age-appropriate. Share a clip or the entire Podcast, depending on the length of the session. Depending on the sensitive information in a Podcast, send it to a parent/guardian for approval. Have the clip cued up, with the ads already skipped, and any unnecessary intros already jumped, then mute the client from my end, so there is no feedback, and they hear the Podcast through their speakers. If they need to pause want to ask a question, they use a gesture we agreed upon for unmuting. In the end, we process the client's reactions around the content. The Podcasts can be useful resources for the clients to utilize as coping skills. It works to assign a Podcast as homework, with a worksheet to complete and process their reactions in the next session. These are good for family therapy as the whole family can process their responses to the information and discuss it in family therapy. Podcasts I have used in a session include:
 - **Play Time: A Play Therapy Podcast** with Andrew Barnett of Barnett Child Therapy
 - **Play Therapy Community Podcast** with Lisa Dion of Play Therapy Community
 - **Kid Therapist Podcast** with Allison McQuaid
 - **The Better Mental Health for Kids and Parents Podcast** with Dr. Fasano
 - **Short and Curly** with Dr. Matt Beard, Carl Smith, and Molly Daniels
 - **Unspookable** with Soundsington Media
- **Online Gaming:** There are plenty of ways to play games online with children. Avoid any games that involve substantial multiplayer, or online community experience, that need to be downloaded, or that require a screen name. If you have to create a log-in, make sure it is with your HIPAA compliant email and something nondescript like "person85." Play Uno or play checkers, chess, or connect four with **Skill Games Board**. Play card games like Go Fish or Match with **PlayingCards.io**. You can even get a free Minecraft Serve through **Aternos**. Minecraft is a great game to discuss home life. For art therapists, it is a digital way to do the House portion of the **House-Tree-Person Assessment**. Even nonart therapists can

discuss home life without doing it as an assessment. Work with the youth to build a home. It isn't difficult for someone who hasn't played before, to learn. The goal is to have the child do most of the work themselves. Talk about what makes a home safe. Have them focus on "comfort zones," "safety measures," and "areas to avoid without supervision." These will take parent consent, consenting to opt-in to use online gameplay for therapeutic means, and discussing the benefits and risks.



Go-To's
Transitioning therapy online with youth, family, and children may seem daunting. Fear not. A lot of these interventions mentioned, you are probably using in in-person therapy already. We rarely have interventions where we need to "touch" a client. Think about your common intervention go-to's, add a screen, and visualize the barriers you need to overcome to make that intervention possible. There are still a whole host of common interventions that can be used in online therapy. Some include mindfulness meditation, journaling,

empty chair technique, or therapeutic role play. With some solution-focused thinking, you'll see it wasn't as difficult as you made it out to be.

BONUS ACTIVITY: With the abundance of toilet paper everyone now has in their homes, here are 15 crafts to create with toilet paper rolls! Choose one that has materials both you and your client have on hand, and create something together. Good project to do with parents/guardians and children to learn fine motor skills and following directions. *This article was reprinted with permission by the author. Ariel Landrum is the Director of Guidance Teletherapy. She runs the day-to-day operations, and is one of our treating clinicians. She writes about mindfulness, coping skills, and navigating the private practice world. <https://www.guidancett.com/blog/interventions-for-online-therapy-with-children-and-youth-2020>*

“WHEN YOU’RE *free*, YOU CAN PLAY
AND WHEN YOU’RE *playing*, YOU BECOME FREE”

- HEIDI KADUSON



Welcome New (and Returning) Board Members

SCAPT, is pleased to announce the results of the the Board Election that was held last fall. Welcome back to the Board, Jennifer Elkins, Lecole Sanders, and Sally Moore. The newest Board member is Tina Kelly.

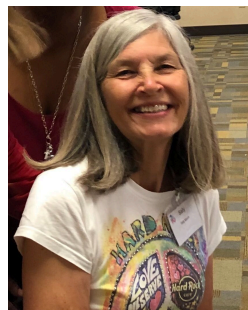
Jennifer will be serving in the capacity of Director at Large and Program Reviewer; Lecole is returning in her role as Secretary, and Sally will continue as treasurer for SCAPT. Tina will be serving as a Director at Large.



Jennifer Elkins, Director at Large; Program Reviewer



Lecole Sanders, Secretary



Sally Moore, Treasurer



Tina Kelly, Director at Large



South Carolina Association for Play Therapy Mission and Scope:

The mission of SCAPT shall be to advance the psychosocial development and mental health of all people through play and play therapy by promoting:

1. Understanding and valuing of play and play therapy.
2. Effective practice of play therapy through training, research, and support.
3. Recognition, incorporation, and preservation of diversity in play therapy.
4. Development and maintenance of a strong professional organization to accomplish these objectives.

South Carolina Association for Play Therapy Current Board:

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Director-at-Large; Student Liaison: Jennifer Geddes-Hall, Ph.D. LPC, RPT

Director-at- Large: Tina Kelly, MEd, RPT

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