Learning Objectives
1. Participants will understand a brief history of play therapy and game use in play therapy.
2. Participants will understand how games can be used therapeutically for those affected by cancer in a school setting.
3. Participants will be able to identify ways to use several games therapeutically in the school setting.
4. Participants will be able to develop student specific goals for games in the classroom or school setting.
5. Participants will be able to utilize skills learned to help students affected by cancer to express their emotions as well as manage their emotions in an academic setting.

Children and Teen Cancer Statistics
Each year in the U.S., an estimated 18,780 children aged 0-19 are diagnosed with cancer.
Approximately 1 in 285 in the U.S. will be diagnosed with cancer before their 20th birthday.
Globally there are more than 300,000 children diagnosed with cancer each year.
From: American Childhood Cancer Organization - acoc.org
**Childhood Cancer**

1. **One in 250 children in the US will be diagnosed with cancer before they are 15.**
   - Childhood cancer is the second leading cause of death in children due to injury or disease.
   - More than 235 children will die of cancer each year in the US.

2. **4%** of each year’s new cancer cases are diagnosed in children and teens.
   - The majority of childhood cancers are diagnosed in children younger than the age of 15.

**Adult Cancer Statistics**

725,546 new cases of cancer in 2017, as reported by the CDC, in adults ages 20-65, the ages of parents of children and teens.

There were over 1.6 million new cases of cancer in 2017 of all ages.

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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**What is Play Therapy?**

“Play therapy is a systematic use of a theoretical model of play by a skilled professional whoUse the powers of play to help clients prevent or resolve psychosocial difficulties to achieve optimal growth and development.”

(Association for Play Therapy, 1997)
Beginnings of Play Therapy

1. In the early 20th century adult psychotherapy was adapted to meet the mental health needs of children (Johnson, 2019)

2. Play was understood to be a "natural way of establishing relationships, communicating, and problem solving" for children (Seymour, p. 3, 2016)

3. There are many different theoretical orientations within the field of play therapy, including Cognitive, Behavioral, Adlerian, Experiential, Jungian, Psychodynamic, and Psychoanalytic, as well as Family Play therapy (Johnson, 2019)

Play Therapy using Games

1. Games have been used since prehistoric times (Stone, 2016)

2. "Play is a natural medium for children to explore fears and anxiety due to their underdeveloped cognitive and verbal skills" (Murray, p. 129, 2019)

3. Games can help with mastery, frustration, tolerance, coping skills, strategic abilities, social interaction, competitiveness, compliance and building rapport (Stone, 2016)

Play Therapy using Games continued...

4. Therapeutic power of games include building self-control, moral development, self-expression, executive functioning, mood elevation, self-esteem, attachment formation, and social skills (Stone & Schaefer, 2019)

5. "When deciding to modify an existing game or create a new game, first consider the purpose of the game. Identify what to optimally address the issue. After developing the game, assess it to ensure it meets the therapeutic goals" (Shawki, p. 102, 2008)
Play Therapy using Games continued...

6. Games can be used to address grief, “in keeping with a focus on the strength-based model, clinicians are encouraged to choose games and other activities that help identify feelings, thoughts, and beliefs and normalize and validate the client’s reactions” (Verbe, pg 176)

7. Cooperative games have been used successfully in the school setting to reduce verbal and physical bullying behaviors over a three-month period in physical education classes (Oliveira et al., 2007)

Play Therapy and Serious Illness

1. Play therapy can help reduce anxiety and hopelessness among children struggling with cancer (Sadeghi, 2019)

2. Cognitive-behavioral art play therapy and story therapy have been helpful in reducing anxiety and depression of children with cancer in educational and therapeutic settings (Gilparvar, Aghaei, & Baradaran, 2009)

Play Therapy and Serious Illness continued...

3. Play therapy in hospital settings has been found to reduce anxiety, improve attitude, and decrease pain in children during hospitalization (Gonzalez-Sanchez et al., 2020)

Game play therapy

Benefits of use of games:
1. Games are enjoyable.
2. Games help separate from real life and allow fantasy experiences.
3. Rules help define and restrict player behavior.
4. Players compete with each other toward a goal.
5. Games pose a challenge.
6. Games involve interaction of 2 or more.
(Schoefler & Reid, 1986)

When to use games in school setting:

"Cooperative games can be used in any school setting (office, home, or school) for a multitude of presenting problems." (Taylor, a 57, 2019)

1. A student was recently diagnosed with cancer and the class may have feelings to express.
2. A student or students have a family member with cancer.
   1. A student lost a family member to cancer.
   1. A student passed away from cancer

Where to use games in schools:

1. Small classroom groups
2. Individual guidance meetings
3. Small group guidance meetings
4. Parent and child guidance meetings
5. Larger classroom groups

10/12/2020
**Determining goals for therapeutic game use**

1. Open forum for expression
2. Discuss and answer specific questions
3. Develop specific coping skills
4. Understand how students are coping
5. Increase student understanding of situations and emotions (Swank, 2008) (Yorke, 2019)

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**Decision making about games to use**

1. Age of students
2. Emotional openness of students
3. Emotional safety of classroom or guidance environment
4. Parent considerations with questions asked
5. Group size
6. Emotional impact of loss or diagnosis (Swank, 2008)

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**Decision Making Chart for Game Use**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Use Info</th>
<th>2 players</th>
<th>3 players</th>
<th>4 players</th>
<th>5 players</th>
<th>6 players</th>
<th>Group size 1</th>
<th>Group size 2</th>
<th>Group size 3</th>
<th>Group size 4</th>
<th>Group size 5</th>
<th>Group size 6</th>
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<th>Therapeutic Setting</th>
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<td>Friendly Guidance</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>Friendly Guidance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Choose 2 numbers and have to say something whenever they come up—ie a frustration, a wish, something that makes you sad, mad, worried—based on therapy goals for patient
2. Ask a question every time the color changes
3. For color change or numbers—give ways to handle feelings better—coping strategies
4. Whenever you have to pick up a card share something that bothers you
5. Each color or number corresponds to a question or feeling you can answer or share accordingly

Idea for Games to Adapt

Checkers
Uno
Sorry
Don’t break the ice
Card and
Karplank
Chutes and ladders
Playing cards
Jenga
Chess
Scribbles
Mr. Mouth
Pictionary
(Dyson, 2017)

Checkers
1. When you jump another player share a worry
2. When you get a king give coping skills you can or do use
3. Put different color stickers on the pieces and when you move them they correspond to different questions.

Uno
1. Choose 2 numbers and have to say something whenever they come up—ie a frustration, a wish, something that makes you sad, mad, worried—based on therapy goals for patient
2. Ask a question every time the color changes
3. For color change or numbers—give ways to handle feelings better—coping strategies
4. Whenever you have to pick up a card share something that bothers you
5. Each color or number corresponds to a question or feeling you can answer or share accordingly
Sorry
1. Choose 2 cards that when they get picked up you share, ask a question, ex 7 and 11.
2. When you go back to start you have to share something that worries you, makes you angry or sad.
3. Each number is a question or feeling you answer.

Don’t Break the Ice
1. With stickers - write different prompts to share feelings, practice coping skills, ask each other questions etc. When each black card is your turn do what each sticker prescribes.
2. For each turn give examples of either challenges in your life, when you feel on thin ice, or a breakthrough you had in your life.

Candy Land
1. Every color is a feeling, when you pull a card share a feeling, double colors are 2 feelings.
2. When you go backwards share a struggle you have had.
3. When you get special cards share a wish (Swank, 2008)
Kerplunk
1. When marbles don’t fall discuss triumphs or strengths
2. When marbles fall discuss weaknesses or challenges/barriers

Chutes and Ladders
1. Every time you go down a slide or up a ladder you answer a question or share a feeling; ladder could be share a happy up moment and slide a down or sad moment
2. For each number you spin there is a corresponding question or feeling (Downe, 2008)

Playing Cards
1. Black Jack: every time they win a hand they share one kind of feeling, share another when they lose
2. War: when certain numbers get put down share thoughts, feelings or coping strategies
3. Trash Talk: while playing game, whoever wins a round they have to share, answer question
Jenga
1. For each middle piece share something you feel in the middle of, feeling trapped or feeling warm and cozy.
2. For each side piece you remove share about feeling on edge, worried or a time you were brave.
3. Put stickers on Jenga blocks with questions, coping skills to practice or feelings to share. Do the activity prescribed when you pull that piece.

Chess
1. Different questions or feelings correspond to each different piece you move.
2. When you take an opponent’s piece share something or answer a question.

Scrabble
1. Provide larger amounts of letters to be able to come up with a word that shares something about their experience.
2. Create theme for game and come up with words connected to the theme such as coping skills, ways to escape, wishes etc.
Mr. Mouth
1. When you get a fly in his mouth, share a triumph in life and share a disappointment when you miss.
2. Ask questions from a list when you miss and take a break when you get one in.

Pictionary
1. Create a list of things to draw that will help self-expression such as feelings, medical terms or names in hospital, needle, sick, coping skills ie. meditating, running, playing on the bed, drawing, jumping on the bed.
2. Have an option of coming up with a place or activity or feeling themselves for the game.
(Swarz, 2008)

Summary
Games have been used in play therapy for many years as a means of helping patients learn and express emotions. The therapeutic use of games can be adapted for school use to help students cope with and express emotions related to the impact of cancer in their lives. Ways to utilize a variety of games therapeutically has for each game. Methods to make decisions about which games to use for various student populations and goals for the use of each game have also been reviewed.
REFERENCES
Association for Play Therapy. (1997). A definition of play therapy. The Association for Play Therapy Newsletter, 16(3), 1.


REFERENCES cont.


