LEGO®-Based Play Therapy for School Social Workers
Instructor: Ragan Snyder-Smith, LSCSW, RPT-S

Learning Objectives

- History and fundamentals of Legos and how it pertains to the play therapy setting.
- Focus on the fundamental principles and techniques of Lego-based play therapy through instruction, demonstration, video and experiential engagement.
- Implementing Lego-based play therapy techniques central to work with empathy skills, social skills, perspective taking, healthy friendships and learn how Legos can be used in connection with play therapy treatment goals and positive behavior reinforcement.
- Discuss common Lego-based play therapy techniques used with children with a variety of developmental delays and diagnoses in the playroom.
A little about me…

School Social Worker for 15 years and work part-time for a non-profit agency as a Behavior Specialist and teach Crisis / de-escalation Intervention classes

Background in child welfare/adoptions, addictions, Autism, medical/psychiatric social work, private practice and play therapy!

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, traveling, mindfulness, reading, running, yoga & healthy living.
Lego Therapy Sessions

Play Therapy Credentials - A4PT.org
- Registered Play Therapist (RPT)
- Registered Play Therapist-Supervisor (RPT-S)
- School Based-Registered Play Therapist (SB-RPT)

https://www.a4pt.org/page/CredentialsHomepage

Definition of Play Therapy by the Association for Play Therapy (APT)
- Play Therapy is defined by APT as “the systematic use of a theoretical model to establish an interpersonal process wherein trained Play Therapists use the therapeutic powers of play to help clients prevent or resolve psychosocial difficulties and achieve optimal growth and development.”
- Play Therapy should only be provided by mental health professionals who have met the required education, licensure, and additional specialized training and supervision specific to Play Therapy.
Lego History

- Founded in 1932 by Ole Kristiansen in Denmark
- The name 'LEGO' is an abbreviation of the two Danish words "leg/godt", meaning "play well". In Latin, the word means "I put together".
- Began with 6 employees in a woodshop in 1932, now has 18,000 employees worldwide and one of the biggest toy manufacturers in the world
- For more history watch: The Lego Story on YouTube (animated), Brickumentary, The Toys that Made Us Season 2

Legos for Grown Ups!

- Range aims to help managers develop business strategies using Lego bricks
- "The LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® methodology is an innovative process designed to enhance innovation and business performance. Based on research which shows that hands-on learning produces a deeper, more meaningful understanding of the world and its possibilities, the LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® methodology deepens the reflective process and supports an effective dialogue – for everyone in the organisation." – Serious Play Website

Video
Lego Pieces
Types of brick, Lego materials and organization

Age-by-Age Guide for Legos

- Duplos Ages 1-3
- Legos Junior 4-7
- Classic Legos 5-12 & 7-16+

- https://www.commonsensemedia.org/lists/lego-age-by-age-guide

Base Plates and Assortment Sets
Minifigs

- https://minifigures.com
- https://www.minifig-madness.com
- http://www.minifiglabs.com/store.html
Lego Feelings Pieces

How Do You Find Them?

- Garage Sales
- Grants
- CraigList or Facebook
- HOA Association
- Friends and Family
- Krazy Coupon Lady
- Lego Store or Hobby Stores
- Websites: Lego, Amazon, Brickowl, Bricklink, BrickScout
- Rent and Return sets

And where do you keep them?

- Lego Table
- Lego Bag
- Tackle Boxes
- Clear Floss Containers
- Clear Storage Bins
- Clear Over the Door Shoe Organizer
- Choosing a Lego Table: http://www.bricksfans.com
  Blog
Legos on the go

If you are handy…

- https://thejoysofboys.com/diy-lego-table/

Photos courtesy of Ben Piper, RPT
Lego Wall

- [https://www.arktherapeutic.com/blog/building-a-therapy-lego-wall/](https://www.arktherapeutic.com/blog/building-a-therapy-lego-wall/)

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Elementary School Makerspace

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Lego Books

- [THE LEGO IDEAS BOOK](https://www.arktherapeutic.com/blog/building-a-therapy-lego-wall/)
- [EPIC LEGO ADVENTURES](https://www.arktherapeutic.com/blog/building-a-therapy-lego-wall/)
- [AWESOME LEGO CREATIONS](https://www.arktherapeutic.com/blog/building-a-therapy-lego-wall/)
Lego Therapy

History of Lego Therapy

- LEGO®-Based Therapy was created by Daniel LeGoff, a psychologist in the USA, after he noticed two children in his waiting room, playing together using their LEGO® sets.

- The children had not shown any previous motivation to interact and it seemed likely that their common interest in LEGO® had given them the enthusiasm to engage socially.

Lego Therapy

- During his weekly LEGO®-Based Therapy with the two children, LeGoff allocated specific joint and interactive jobs within the LEGO® building and made the children take turns to carry out each role.

- He provided a structured set of rules

- Resulted in development of key skills which were previously challenging for children with ASD to gain

- The adult was able to take the role of facilitator, highlighting the presence of any problems and encouraging pupils to come up with solutions

- Stick to the fundamentals of play therapy

LeGoff, 2014
Goals in Lego Therapy

- Joint Attention
- Turn Taking / Sharing
- Problem Solving
- Communication Skills (verbal and non-verbal)
- Social Skills

Other benefits

- Social Skills
- Fine Motor Skills
- Sensorimotor Skills
- Self-efficacy Skills
- A child does not have to read to be able to follow picture directions
- Shared enjoyment and shared interest!
- Variety of building projects
Everyone Has a Job

**Pairs**
- Designer – Tells other person what to build
- Builder – Finds and puts the Lego pieces together

**Groups**
- Designer – Tells everyone what to build
- Supplier / Sorter – Finds the right Lego pieces
- Builder – Puts the Lego pieces together

Videos

Group Activity

1) Pair up in a group of 3. You will have a ziplock bag with a set of legos, job cards, a set of legos and pictures of a Lego build. If the Lego builds are double sided, do the ones with red stars on them.
2) Each participant will have a job. Run through the activity. Switch roles so each person has an opportunity to be the Builder, Supplier and Architect.
3) Come back and we will process as a group.
Things to Consider...

- Match children along ages, diagnoses and cognitive abilities
- Target population
- Geographical location/ Availability of space
- Role and task assignment
- Types of materials matched to level of child
- Displays for finished products
- Therapist’s Role
- Group Process

Axline’s Principles of Play Therapy

1. Must develop a warm and friendly relationship with the child.
2. Accepts the child as she or he is.
3. Establishes a feeling of permission in the relationship so that the child feels free to express his or her feelings completely.
4. Is alert to recognize the feelings the child is expressing and reflects these feelings back in such a manner that the child gains insight into his/her behavior.

5. Maintains a deep respect for the child’s ability to solve his/her problems and gives the child the opportunity to do so. The responsibility to make choices and to institute change is the child’s.
6. Does not attempt to direct the child’s actions or conversations in any manner. The child leads the way, the therapist follows.
7. Does not hurry the therapy along. It is a gradual process and must be recognized as such by the therapist.
8. Only establishes those limitations necessary to anchor the therapy to the world of reality and to make the child aware of his/her responsibility in the relationship.
Lego Group Therapy Approach...

- Mr. Potato Head
- Marble Runs
- K'Nex
- Other building blocks

Let Go with Legos

- Legos and Mindfulness: Playing with Legos as children allowed us to become completely absorbed in the worlds we created.
- Children don’t worry about the past or the future when they play. Adults can copy this too.
- Building your own Lego universe keeps your imagination at the forefront and helps you forget everything around you while still having fun.

Activities: Lego Mandala
http://mamapapabubba.com/2017/06/13/lego-mandala-art/

Lego in Safe Spot in a School

Lego Challenge Cards

http://www.sunshineandhurricanes.com/lego-game-snacks/
Perspective Taking Activity

- Gather up lego pieces and make sure you have two of each piece. Then separate the piece into groups so both children have an identical group of legos.
- One child makes a design with their legos.
- Then, here comes the challenging part. They have to communicate with their partner about what their lego creation looks like and have the other child make the exact same lego creation. [https://www.encourageplay.com/blog/taking-someone-else's-perspective-a-lesson-with-legos](https://www.encourageplay.com/blog/taking-someone-else's-perspective-a-lesson-with-legos)

Taking Perspectives Play Activity

Thera-Build

- Modality designed by Alyson Thomsen
- Thera-Build Process
  - Build, Play, Listen, Notice and Respond
  - “Legos can be a great metaphor for life’s changes, as models are built, taken apart and reconstructed over time.” (Page 122)
Resilience SeeSaw

- Ask the child to write their stressors onto stickers and fix them to the Lego Bricks.
- Teach children positive strategies for bringing about balance

Alyson Thompson, Therabuild (127-128)

Stress/Worry Jar

- Provide children a small jar and variety of different Legos. Use a small jar to help the child feeling overwhelmed.
- The child can identify individual stressors/ worries.
- As they are placed in to the jar, talk about each one and process.

Alysen Thompson, Therabuild (126)

You, Me, Lego

- Client and the practitioner each build a sculpture out of Legos and it should be “something in a family”, then each share what they made
- Next, client and therapist combine creations to make a new object that is found in a family. More Legos can be added. Should be collaborative effort.
- Process what was made how it was to work together, lead into conversation about working together to accomplish something

Intervention from Dr. Robert Joan Grant, AuPlay Therapy
Lego Feelings

- Feelings Identification (Made and Take!)
- Feelings Checkins (Zones of Regulation, etc)
- Search and Find (Focusing, Attention)
- Lego Emotional Barometer
- Social Stories (TPT)
Building Emotions


Lego Emojis

- Lego Emoji videos (Youtube videos in Resources)

Lego Self Portrait:
http://mamapapabubba.com/2017/06/14/lego-self-portraits/

Mood Monsters

- http://www.build-happy.co.uk/buildhappy-mood-monsters/
Legos in the Sandtray

https://fun-a-day.com/star-wars-small-world-outer-space-theme/

Lego Speech Bubbles & Stick Bots

https://sites.google.com/site/creativescounseling/lessonplans/legoconversationalskills
https://confidence-meets-parenting.com/minifigures-storytelling/
Stop Motion Youtube Video (in references)
Use: Story Jumper website, book apps or Story Cubes
Lego Puppet Theatre (link in back)

Lego Marble Mazes

- http://mamapapabubba.com/2015/05/28/lego-marble-maze/
Lego Calm Down Jars

http://lemonlimeadventures.com/lego-calm-down-jar/#_a5y_p=1582719
http://lemonlimeadventures.com/lego-man-snow-globes/
https://childhood101.com/calm-down-bottle/

Legos in a Clear Jar of Rice, minifigs or legos in a ziplock bag with hair gel

Lego Inside Out Emotions

http://lalymom.com/lego-build-ideas-lego-emotions-station/

Fidgets / Sensory

https://frugalfun4boys.com/2017/05/04/build-lego-fidget-spinner/


Lego Bubbles
Lego Chew Necklaces
Lego Slime

https://littlebinsforlittlehands.com/lego-slime-sensory-search-find-minifigures/


Time Management and Legos

https://brainpowerboy.com/lego-time-management-technique/

Video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=d5xAQnwPKIE

Legos in Therapy Goals

- Collecting Data – Assessments in Dr. LeGoff’s Books
- TheraBuild Data Collection
- Specific skill goals - self-esteem, emotional identification, problem-solving, confidence in the play room
- Resources in back of handout
Closing Remark & Evaluations
Thank you for coming!

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