

## Our Theraplay Practicum Experience

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Meet Practicum Student of the Month: Charlotte Jenkins



I first heard about Theraplay<sup>®</sup> as a practicing social worker, working with children who were fostered or adopted. I worked in teams where colleagues had done the training and introduced the core ideas. I became more and more interested. It made sense: we all love to play and know that is how children learn.

Theraplay is such a powerful way to connect with children, their parents or carers. The powerful but simple games and activities mean so much to families. They find time to play. Spending forty five minutes with a child enjoying a balloon, or bubbles, or singing can be the best part of their week. Theraplay, for me, is a tool that lets you give families the attachment experiences they are needing.

I work as an independent social worker running a small private practice, Beacon Family Services. I use Theraplay not just with children who are adopted or fostered but within biologically related families too.

Separation anxiety, ASD, and ADHD can be really challenging for families and Theraplay can give them some positive time where new opportunities for the parent and child are built. For children with Autism and ADHD relationships can be a real

challenge. Play with a parent can help them to build their skills and tolerance in a really safe environment. So many parents really need to recharge their batteries and can achieve that whilst learning new ways to help their child.

After attending an introduction to Theraplay course, I couldn't wait to undertake Level One. As a solo practitioner, the practicum has given me a community of practice to help refine my approach to Theraplay. Reviewing practice with my supervisor, Andrea Bushala, has helped increase my confidence as a practitioner and created space to reflect. The practicum is about developing at your pace whilst making sure that the children and their families are getting the most from your practice. My supervisor's ability to engage me, nurture me, and challenge me in a structured way is true to Theraplay!

For me the next steps are to keep going and start group training. For many children accessing Theraplay, school can be hard, especially where autism and ADHD effect relationships with peers. Many of the children I see with their families need playful support not just at home but at school. Often their wonderful teachers are there wanting to help and I firmly believe Theraplay is part of the answer. So watching this space...I will be continuing my Theraplay journey with the practicum.

“ I am in the process of becoming a certified Theraplay therapist and it has been one of the best experiences in my career as a child Psychologist. The supervisors and staff are dedicated, very supportive and easy to approach. I was assigned one supervisor however have the opportunity to be supervised by three. The process is easy, feedback is timely and the learning process is enhanced through the option of being a part of live supervision sessions as a participant or observer. Definitely worth the time and money to forward my career.”

– *Julie Cajolet-Eckhardt (United States)*

“ I can honestly say that I have had a very positive experience of being part of the practicum, all of the team are excellent with their support and advise and make you feel extremely comfortable in asking any small question that you may have. All of the workers i have had the pleasure of meeting have also been great at building my confidence. They have inspired me and given me enthusiasm to go away and implement. A massive thank you to all!”

– *Debbie Leatherland (United Kingdom)*

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