

**Winter
2004**

Volume 9, Number 1

**FAPT Board
Members**

President:
Janet Courtney

Vice-president:
Larry Rubin

Secretary:
Elaine Sadkowski

Interim Treasurer:
Robert Nolan

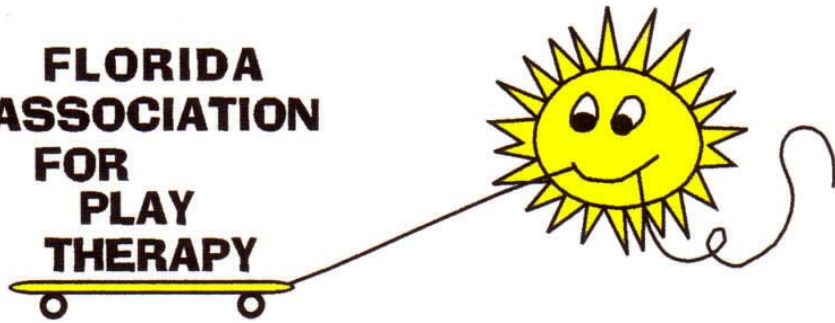
Members-At-Large:
**Terri Gutierrez
Diana Malca**

Immediate
Past President:
Lisa Saldaña



**Join Us In
Orlando for
the
2004 FAPT
Conference
February 27
and 28**

**FLORIDA
ASSOCIATION
FOR
PLAY
THERAPY**



The Playful Healer

The Newsletter of the Florida Association for Play Therapy, Inc.

Message from the President

Dear FAPT Members,

Welcome the New Year! Wishing you all a joyous and prosperous 2004. The holidays can usually bring to us new gifts in our life, often given to us as surprises. My new "gift" is a gray and white kitten named Lilly. She has brought new life into the house and it is especially fun to watch her bring out the playfulness in my 8 year old often sleepy, subdued Labrador Retriever, named Raisin. Raisin is now often caught running around the house playing with the kitten. What fun to watch. But it also brings home an important reminder for all of us. The young, like the children we see in practice, really do remind us and teach us over and over again how to play and be spontaneous.

The most exciting news for FAPT this year is the event of our **Annual Conference** co-sponsored with the School of Education at the University of Central Florida in Orlando on February 27 and 28, 2004.

Mark those dates now and share the news with your friends and agencies. Be on the watch for the conference brochures to be mailed out this month of January.

On Friday, February 27th, 2004 **Eliana Gil** will be presenting on Family Play

Therapy. On Saturday, February 28 your FAPT Annual Conference committee members have selected several excellent speakers from all over the state of Florida presenting on relevant play therapy topics. (Look in this newsletter for more information) Membership in FAPT will grant you a discounted rate at the conference.

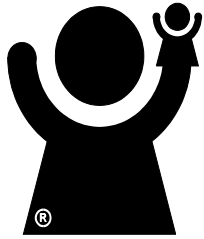
Looking forward to meeting you all at our conference.

With Warmest Appreciation for Your Service to Children,

Janet A. Courtney
President, FAPT

Contents:

APT News	2
FAPT News.	3
FAPT Contact Information.	3
On Becoming A Play Therapist	4
Book Review	5
Did You Know.	5
Do You Have Any Toys?.	7
Membership.	10



News from The Association for Play Therapy

2004 SPRING PLAY THERAPY INSTITUTES

APT will sponsor two intensive regional Spring Play Therapy Institutes in response to your surveyed preferences for more advanced training and more local and regional training opportunities. The institutes will offer two distinct tracks: An advanced track for play therapists with at least 150 hours play therapy training and 5 years experience (Fee \$250.00); A beginning track for graduate students and new play therapists which will address setting up a play room, establishing limits, the role and use of toys, etc. (Fee \$225.00). There will also be an opportunity to participate in a four hour clinical supervision group at a fee of \$125.00.

Fort Wayne Marriott, Ft. Wayne, Indiana

Fri-Sat, April 30-May 1, 2004 (8:30a - 4:00p daily, 12 hours of CE)

Linda Homeyer, PhD, RPT-S - Advanced Track

Scott Riviere, LPC, RPT-S - Beginning Track

Sun, May 2, 8:00a-12:00n, Play Therapy Clinical Supervision

Sheraton Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, N. Carolina

Fri-Sat, May 14-15, 2004 (8:30a - 4:00p, 12 hours of CE)

Kevin O'Connor, PhD, RPT-S - Advanced Track

Paris Goodyear-Brown, LCSW, RPT-S

Beginning Track

Sun, May 16, 8:00a-12:00n, Play Therapy Clinical Supervision

For more information or registration, visit our website or contact Kathy Lebby at (559) 252-2289

WEBSITE COMMUNITY FORUMS

Would you like to communicate with your fellow APT members about common concerns? Then swap questions and comments in one of the four Community Forums on our website home page (www.a4pt.org). Forums are available on Play Therapy (theories, techniques, tips, etc.), Research, Conference (or trainings), and Branches. To participate, you need only register to obtain a password, enter the forum of your choice, post your questions or comments, and then visit the forum daily to monitor responses. In the past, members have advised graduate students and new practitioners, located conference roommates to reduce lodging costs, and obtained job leads. These forums work - if you use them!

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

As we reported in your December newsletter, to control rising costs without raising membership dues, President **Nancy Davis** (IN) and the Board of Directors elected to discontinue publishing and distributing our annual membership directory. If you wish to locate or contact members, you can go to our website (www.a4pt.org) click on "Member Directory," and search for them by name, credential, city, state, nation, and other criteria. If you don't have internet access, you can order a directory on CD. For details, contact **Diane Leon**, (559) 252-2278.

2004 "MEMBER GET A MEMBER" CAMPAIGN

Recruit new members by June 30, 2004 and reduce your membership dues, RPT/S fees, bookstore costs, conference registration fees, etc.! You will be awarded a \$25 credit voucher for each 4 points earned and may apply your voucher(s) to any APT program, service, or activity. Earn 8 points and receive 2 vouchers worth \$50! To receive points, the application submitted with full payment by new members must display your name as sponsor. Print online applications or order membership brochures from Diane Leon, (559) 252-2278. Membership growth is important to a volunteer organization as it represents new ideas, more play therapy apostles, and generates the revenues necessary to sponsor more ambitious programs and services. Please help APT grow!

APT POLL RESULTS

Why do mental health professionals become APT members? The most frequently suggested reasons given by respondents to our APT Poll were: To learn a new treatment modality and thereby better help children and other clients: 70%. To network with their peers: 20%. To enjoy APT membership benefits, i.e. publications and fee discounts: 10%.

Bill Burns, CAE

Executive Director

Association for Play Therapy, Inc.

2050 N. Winery Ave., #101

Fresno, CA 93703 USA

(559) 252-2291, Fax (559) 252-2297

bburns@a4pt.org, www.a4pt.org

The Playful Healer

Co-Editors:

Diana Malca and Lisa Saldaña

Contributors:

Norma Bonet

FAPT NEWS

CONGRATULATIONS!

We want to recognize three people in this newsletter: **Marla Johnson**, LMHC, Volusia County and **Charlie Myers** of Tampa. Both received their registration as an **RPT**. **Kathleen Johnson**, LCSW, is our latest **RPT-S** in Orange Park.

Central Florida

A new chapter is in the process of forming! The Central Florida Chapter will cover Orange, Osceola, and Seminole counties. The Chapter's first slate of officers has been confirmed: **Sally Crumly** will serve as President, **Greg Nute** as Vice President, and **Jill Davis** as Secretary Treasurer. At this point they are in the process of completing the paperwork and hope to have the application approved by FAPT in February.

As they await chapterhood, the group will meet for networking and training in January. The next meeting will be on Thursday, January 29, 8:30-10 am, at the Howard Phillips Center. Participants will each staff a play therapy case. If you can't make January's meeting, the group meets the last Thursday of each month from 8:30-10 at HPC. For more information, please contact Sally at 407-895-4246, Greg at 407-273-7117 or Jill at 407-823-2200 or jkdclsw@msn.com; or just join us at the Howard Phillips Center on the 29th.

Miami-Dade Chapter

The Miami-Dade Chapter has been meeting for monthly play therapy group supervisions and they are happy to announce that they are currently working on a schedule of regular play therapy training sessions. These sessions will provide 2.5 hours of APT approved play therapy continuing education to participants. For more information, or to become involved in the Miami-Dade Chapter, contact **Deidre Skigen** at powerofplay@worldnet.att.net or (305) 596-3777.

Tampa Bay Chapter of FAPT

On November 20, 2003, **Philip Fauerbach**, presented "Developmental Play Therapy: A Pre-Symbolic Play Therapy Model", which he originally learned from Viola Brody. The nine members present learned the value of therapeutic touch within the play therapy process.

Tampa Bay Chapter is planning to hold their next meeting at the end of January or beginning of February, depending on space availability. They are hoping to alternate meetings between both sides of the bay, i.e., Tampa and Pinellas and would welcome any offer of a meeting space on the Pinellas side of the bay. (Please contact

Jennifer if you have a space to offer.) For more details, or to get involved, contact either **Jennifer Baggerly** (baggerly@tempest.co.edu.usf.edu or 813-974-6714) or **Loretta Gallo-Lopez** (813-963-1016 or glfour@aol.com). The chapter has a listserv to keep members informed of upcoming events. If you would like to be added to their listserv please contact Loretta at Glfour@aol.com or Charlie Myers at Charles.Myers@sdhc.k12.FL.US.

Broward

Interested in getting involved with the Broward Chapter? Contact **Ines Noto** (at 954-724-3979 or alnoto@earthlink.net) or **Chantalle Herrera** (954-724-4053 or cherrera@familycentral.org) for more information on meetings, workshops, and other activities.

FAPT Board Contact Info

President:

Janet Courtney, LCSW, RPT-S
600 Sandtree Drive Suite 203-C
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33403
561-624-8819 ext. #3
e-mail: FAPTcentral@myacc.net

Vice President:

Larry Rubin, PhD, RPT-S
941 NE 19 Ave. #204
Ft. Lauderdale
Florida 33304
954-875-8505
e-mail: rubin@pstcomputers.com

Interim Treasurer:

Robert Nolan, PhD, RPT-S
The Children's Psychiatric Center, Inc.
15490 NW 7th Ave. #200
Miami, FL 33169

Secretary:

Elaine Sadkowski LCSW
10051 NW 50th Manor
Coral Springs, FL 33076
(305)558-2480
e-mail: cessa1022@aol.com

Members at Large:

Teresa Gutierrez , LMHC 7721-D SW 56 Avenue Miami, FL 33143 (305)498-6617 tergut1012@aol.com	Diana Malca , LCSW, RPT-S 20225 NE 34th Ct. #1514 Aventura, FL 33180 305-945-2774 dmalca@bellsouth.net
---	---

Immediate Past President:

Lisa Saldaña, LMHC, RPT-S
7765 SW 87 Avenue Suite 104
Miami, Florida 33173
(305) 975-4690
lisasaldana@aol.com



On Becoming A Play Therapist

As a regular feature in the newsletter, we'd like to meet our members, share what they've learned on their journey towards becoming a Play Therapist and honor the people who have contributed to their professional development.

Take a moment to think about who you are professionally, as well as how you got here. Why did you become a Play Therapist? Who was your greatest influence? What is the most important thing you've learned? How did you get your play therapy education? If you would like to participate, go to our website (www.floridaplaytherapy.org) and complete the Member Survey. Or, answer the following questions on a piece of paper and mail it to: FAPT c/o The Children's Psychiatric Center; 9380 Sunset Drive Suite B-235; Miami, Florida 33173.

In this issue we hear from **Norma Bonet, LCSW** who is working on becoming an RPT or RPT-S:

Practice Location: The Children's Psychiatric Center, Inc. in Miami.

What moved you to learn about Play Therapy?

During my last internship of a Master's Program for social work, I was placed in an agency that promoted professional growth by giving special trainings. I decided to take a play therapy training that was given by Lisa Saldaña during the course of my internship. I decided to do this because I knew I really wanted to work with children and their families after graduate school.

Did you have any classes in Play Therapy in your graduate program? If not, how did you go about getting your Play Therapy education?

No. It was through my final internship that I experienced Play Therapy, which lead me to where I am today (being an active participant to promote play therapy in the community).

Do you have a favorite Play Therapy book? What is it and who is the author?

I suppose it would be "Dibs: In Search of Self" by Virginia Axline.

Who was the person who most influenced you as a Play Therapist? How?

The person who most influenced me as a Play Therapist was Lisa Saldaña. I remember going to trainings on a weekly basis during my internship and seeing this person present with such a passion that was very refreshing. It gave me new ways to deal with a child as a client of therapy. Lisa seems to always have had and still has the zest for play therapy. She brought and still brings the different

types of play therapy to life and makes it manageable for new and even seasoned therapists. I have had the pleasure to take her workshops recently, and remembering her from when she trained me as an intern, realize that she has grown to be a true advocate for play therapy. I only wish that I had a third of the passion she has had and continues to have for play therapy.

If you had to identify only one essential lesson you've learned from a clinical supervisor, what would it be?

I would need to say that it is "START WHERE THE CLIENT IS". This is true not only for adult clients; it's especially true for children. Many times we tend to forget that we are not only trying to solve what the caregiver sees as a problem, but trying to understand what the child identifies as the problem as well. It is very easy for us as clinicians to work with the problem identified by the family, but we tend to forget that the child may also have a problem he or she may see as important. If we are more sensitive to that situation we may identify and process what needs to be processed at the pace of the child.

What is one thing you feel you still need to learn?

There is always room for growth. I feel that there are many different modalities of play therapy that I wish to learn more about and have begun to do by taking different workshops and trainings offered nationwide.

What advice would you give to a student who said they wanted to become a Play Therapist?

You need to have an open mind, be non-judgmental, be patient, allow the client to solve his/her problems at his/her pace, and, at times, not be afraid to have your clients be in the driver's seat.

Advertise in the FAPT Newsletter

Business card sized: \$10.00

1/4 page: \$25.00 1/2 page: \$50.00

Full page: \$75.00

Contact Lisa Saldaña (305-975-4690 or lisasaldana@aol.com) to advertise in the next newsletter.

FAPT reserves the right to reject or cancel advertising for any reason. We will not accept any ad that discriminates against any group or individual.

The publication of any advertisement in the Playful Healer is not an endorsement of the products or services advertised. FAPT is not responsible for any claims made in the advertisement

BOOK REVIEW

Counseling Techniques: Improving Relations With Others, Ourselves, Our Families and Our Environment

By

Rosemary A. Thompson, EdD, NCC, LPC



Reviewed by

Diana Malca, LCSW, RPT-S, CPT-S

This well-written and contemporary book reviews the rainbow of psychotherapeutic modalities and provides the reader with many examples of techniques and applications for the therapeutic session.

The second chapter of the book discusses client-therapist relationships, while the following chapters provide a clear and concise summary of all modalities: The cognitive, behavioral, client-centered, psycho-educational and more. I highly recommend this book, as it refreshes some of the concepts and theories that we have not thought about in a while. In addition, it provides techniques for use with all ages and presenting problems.

Written with much creativity, some techniques may be modified to fit the client and their presenting problem or concern.

The chapters on cognitive-behavior theory are very useful in utilizing and applying within child play therapy, since many children require behavior modification and cognitive restructuring. In addition, the stress reduction techniques that are eloquently written are very helpful to apply in therapy.

The book does not specifically mention play therapy, and I tend to believe that this is due to the lack of knowledge of this growing field. Play therapy is just beginning to be recognized and acknowledged by the public and other professionals as well. I hope that we can all contribute to the growing awareness and appreciation of play therapy through sharing our experience and knowledge on play therapy.

If you have any comments, or would like to share your own book reviews please forward them, for publication to dmalca@bellsouth.net.

DID YOU KNOW?

This is a new column in the newsletter, and we hope to receive feedback from our members. Write to us with questions and issues, as well as sharing your ideas related to play therapy.

The "Good Good-Bye" Chain

By Diana Malca, LCSW, RPT-S, CPT-S

Not long ago, a little boy I see in therapy was leaving for the holidays. His mother was concerned. Her child had been progressing well in therapy, and she was afraid that the long vacation would bring regression.

The child is a bright three-year-old boy who reminds me of Calvin, from Calvin and Hobbes. He is astute, smart, fast, and witty and has lots of energy. He also gets in trouble easily, and is often impulsive.

Play therapy has been consistent for the last five months, and I've utilized filial therapy, behavioral and parenting. In our last session before the vacation, I suggested a fun project we could work on as a "good-bye". I based my choice of activity on D. W. Winnicott's work on transitional objects. My idea was for the boy to create a transitional object to which he could refer when needed: a reminder of all the things we had been doing together in the therapy.

The materials needed for the project include string, art materials, and all types of beads and buttons. These materials were given to the child so he could choose what he liked. He was encouraged to use the materials to decorate the string, to create a chain of symbols and objects. Each object represented strength, a quality, an empowering behavior, things to remember that are good, and people who represent significance in the child's life. Ideas were provided by the child and the therapist.

When completed, his chain included a red button, in which he wrote "dad", a green triangle button in which he wrote "mom". He added symbols for each member in the family who loves him. Additional buttons were inserted on the string for manners, such as, "please", "thank you", a button for feelings, another for sharing, and one for love.

The child's mother reported that during vacation he carried the chain in his bag, and once in a while read it with her.

If you have any ideas that you may be interested in sharing, please, do let us know. You can e-mail to dmalca@bellsouth.net.

The Florida Association for Play Therapy and The University of Central Florida

Present



The 2004 FAPT Conference



Orlando, Florida

Friday, February 27 and Saturday, February 28, 2004

featuring

Family Play Therapy

with **Eliana Gil, PhD, LMFT, RPT-S**

As well as workshops with:

Donna Faranda, PsyD ❁ Christine Bergman, LMHC and Trudy Rankin, LMHC, ISST
❁ Teresa Gutierrez, LMHC ❁ Janet Courtney, LCSW, RPT-S and Robert Nolan,
PhD, RPT-S ❁ Jennifer Baggerly, PhD, LMHC-S, RPT-S, Judy Bourgeois-Smith, M.A.,
Connie Reagan, and Marnie Wonderly, MA ❁ Diedre Skigen, LMHC and Norma
Bonet, LCSW ❁ Linda Hunter PhD, RPT-S and Jane Robinson, LMHC, RPT ❁ Diana
Malca, LCSW, RPT-S, CPT-S ❁ Penny Phares, ARNP, RPT

Plus:

A Clinical Supervision Group with Eliana Gil, PhD, LMFT, RPT-S
(Space is limited to 10 participants, and the \$125.00 fee is separate from the conference fee.)



A FREE Community Presentation

(For parents and teachers in the Orlando area)



Visit Our Vendors



Continuing Education Credit

Continuing education for the conference will be provided by The Institute for Continuing Education. This activity is co-sponsored by The Institute for Continuing Education and the Florida Association for Play Therapy. The Institute for Continuing Education is approved by the American Psychological Association to offer continuing education for psychologists. The Institute maintains responsibility for the program. Florida Provider No. BAP 255, expiration 03/05. APT Provider No. 98-040. For specific questions regarding continuing education credit, please call The Institute at: 251-990-5030; FAX: 251-990-2665; e-mail: instconted@AOL.com.

**Download the full brochure and registration form at our website:
www.floridaplaytherapy.org**

To request that a brochure be mailed to you, or for more information on the conference contact Dr. Leslie Jones at 407-823-4967

Do You Have Any Toys?

By Lisa Saldaña, LMHC, RPT-S

I was just out of graduate school and even though I had always wanted to work with children, had worked primarily with adults and adolescents in my practicums. Now I was in a new job where I would be providing intensive therapeutic on-site services to foster care children. In other words, I would provide therapy in the clients' homes. My clients were all teenagers; except for a child I'll call "Lucy".

Lucy was eight. Huge dark eyes, thick, curly black hair: An adorable little girl. She was so adorable, so attractive, that she was in her third or fourth "pre-adoptive placement". She would easily attract potential adoptive parents, but as soon as the "honeymoon" was over, all her oppositional and defiant behaviors came rushing out. After a period of power struggles and battles, frustrations and disappointments, the adults would return her and her siblings to the foster care system, unable or unwilling to continue the adoptive process.

I was given her background information before I went to the home for the first time. On arrival, I met the foster parents and talked with them for a while. They filled me in on the events since she had joined their family. Next, I met her siblings. Finally, I sat down to begin work with my new client.

The next day, I walked into my supervisor's office. Plopping into a chair, I threw up my hands and proclaimed, "I can't work with this girl! She won't sit and talk with me; she refuses to stay in her chair. She keeps getting up and asking to leave the room, to play with her brother and sister. When I ask her questions, she either doesn't answer at all or shrugs her shoulders. She keeps asking if we're done yet. When it was time to end, she ran out of the room and wouldn't acknowledge me."

Fortunately, I had a clinical supervisor, Myriam Monsalve-Serna, LMFT, who was trained in play therapy. Myriam looked up from her desk. I have no idea what was going through her head, although looking back, I can imagine. She asked me a few questions about Lucy and her life. Then she asked, "Do you have any toys?" My own children were young, so yes, I had toys at home. She suggested a few things, including art supplies, dolls, some little animals, and some games, like checkers. Then she told me that the next time I went to visit Lucy, I was to act

differently. I was to bring out the toys, let Lucy select what we would do. I wasn't to force my agenda. I was to relax and let her choose what we would talk about and do. Be attuned to her, respond to her, and let her lead. Be aware of my own emotional responses. I was to play with Lucy if she asked me to and not worry about rules or what I thought she should be doing.

Play?!? I was supposed to **play** with a client? What was I going to get out of playing with this kid? She was a tough little girl, a child who made grown-ups tear their hair, and I was going to play with her? What would the foster parents think? They wanted me to help this little girl, not play with her! However, I listened quietly. Although skeptical, I was willing to try this new approach, since my way hadn't been very successful.

On my next visit, Lucy was skeptical too. I presented my bag of toys, and told her that she could decide what we were going to do. She spent the first 10 minutes watching me, asking me why I wasn't asking her questions, asking me if she could *really* decide what we would do. Finally, she took up my offer and pulled out the checkerboard. "Can we play this?" she asked. I told her we could, and she immediately began to set it up on the floor.

"You're black," she announced as she set the pieces on the board, then, "I go first," as she moved her red piece on the board. We began to play. She moved, I moved, she moved, I moved. She jumped a couple of my pieces, and I jumped one or two of hers. It seemed like a very normal game of checkers. She wasn't talking, and since I was to follow her lead, I wasn't saying anything either. My skepticism was starting to raise its head. How was this therapeutic?

Then it happened: She got to a point where the only "legal" move would have been to move a piece out of the back row. Instead, she looked up at me and then moved a piece backwards. She was cheating! Nevertheless, I remembered Myriam's instructions, and said nothing. Lucy stared at me for a moment, perhaps waiting for me to call her on the illegal move, and then said "Your turn."

This time, I had to move one of my pieces out of the back row. As soon as I finished the move, Lucy looked at me and said, "You shouldn't do that."

"Do what?" I asked.

"Move out of the back row," she responded, "You should never move out that row."

Intrigued, I looked at the board. "Why?" I asked.

Continued on page 8 . . .

Do You Have Any Toys?

Continued from page 6 . . .

“Cause then I can go there and get a king,” she retorted, with a face and tone that clearly indicated my stupidity.

“And then what?” I asked, “What happens if you get a king?”

“Then I have powers,” she replied, again indicating with her tone that I was hopeless.

“And it’s *bad* if you have powers?” I asked.

As though she were tutoring the most frustrating child she’d ever met, Lucy looked at me and said, “You don’t ever let other people have powers!”

I was stunned: Lucy had just verbalized her “presenting problem.” She was in therapy because she never let the adults have power. I sat there for a moment, awed at what had just occurred. A Play Therapist was born.

Lucy, unaware of what was happening on my side of the board, took this opportunity to move her piece into my back row. Triumphantly, she demanded that I hand over a checker and make her a king. I did so.

Immediately, her red king jumped every black piece on the board. With king in hand, she looked at me and crowed, “You lose!”

“Wow, you jumped every one of my men.” I said. “Can we play again?” she replied.

You may have experienced this yourself: I spent the next 40 minutes playing painfully hopeless games of checkers. I was never able to get a king: Every single one of my checkers would be jumped, some more than once. Some games, I never made more than two moves before losing. I was always blown off the board, and Lucy was having the time of her life. “You lose AGAIN!!” she’d declare, “Can we play again?” Outwardly, I said “sure.” Inwardly, I was thinking “Oh no, not again!” as she set up the board for another annihilation.

When I told her that it was time to end, the child who had refused to acknowledge my presence and refused to say goodbye after our first meeting actually asked me if we really had to quit. Couldn’t we play a while longer? I told her we could play the next time I was there. As I walked to the door, she trailed me, asking

repeatedly if I would really, *really* come back. When I assured her that I would be back in two days, she asked if we could play checkers when I did. “Yes,” I told her, “we can play checkers if you want to.” The smile was dazzling.

I was so excited about what had happened, I couldn’t wait until my next supervision session with Myriam. I sat down and wrote notes on the session, and when it was time for supervision, I was ready to present the case. I was particularly interested in how I was to address Lucy’s cheating. I understood that I was supposed to follow her lead, but obviously, this blatant breaking of the rules just couldn’t go on. As I made my case for the need to stop this behavior, Myriam listened patiently.

Over the years, I have been asked, “What is the one most important thing you learned from a supervisor?” I’ve never had to stop and think: I’ve always remembered what Myriam taught me that day. It’s a lesson I pass on to my own supervisees. As I discussed Lucy’s unfair, all-powerful game of checkers, Myriam asked me: “How did you feel?” “I was angry,” I replied. “Why were you angry?” she continued.

“She was cheating! She was changing the rules to win.”

“And what were you feeling when she’d do that?”

Sitting there, thinking of the “beatings” I had endured at the hands of this eight year old girl, I started to relate the feelings: Angry. Powerless. Frustrated. I felt that no matter what I did, I couldn’t win. I felt powerless as she wiped all my pieces off the board. I felt confused sometimes, because the rules would change halfway through a game. “Maybe,” Myriam said to me, “That’s what she feels.”

As we talked, Myriam helped me to see that the play was a metaphor. Using checkers, Lucy was helping me to understand her experience, not necessarily through her words, but through my experience of the metaphors she created for me. In Lucy’s life, you shouldn’t let people have power, because then you’re powerless. Adults often said one thing but did another. They never kept promises. In her experience, the people who had the power hurt her. As she bounced from place to place, the rules would change and promises would be broken. She was confused and frustrated and angry, and felt like she could never win.

Myriam taught me to look for the metaphor, be aware of the feelings the metaphor created in me, and then use this to help the child.

Continued on page 9 . . .



Do You Have Any Toys?

Continued from page 8 . . .

Lucy and I played checkers for weeks. Instead of being the "Checkers Rules Police", I would allow the game to unfold, as Lucy needed it to. Then I would verbalize my feelings and experiences during the games: "Boy, no matter what I do, I can never win this game." "When I think I understand the rules, they change." "Sometimes I think I know what I'm supposed to do, but then I lose anyway."

At times, she said nothing, at others she might respond with an "mmm-hmm" or nod of her head. Once, when I commented on a loss, she looked at me and said in a very mean voice, "Now you know what it's like to be a loser". Ouch! Another time, when I said, "I wish I could figure out what to do," she touched my hand and quietly said, "It's hard sometimes."

As the weeks passed, things changed, both in the therapy and in her relationships with others. In session, our checkers games slowly became more equal as she began to trust me. I still feel emotional when I recall the first time Lucy moved a checker out of the last row and let me get a king. (Of course, that first time my king was a normal, everyday kind of king. Her king was a super-duper king that immediately jumped every one of my men.) As she let our checkers games become "fair", as she let me have more power and found that I didn't abuse it, her behaviors at home and at school became less problematic.

I continued to discuss Lucy with Myriam. In addition to seeing Lucy, she had me working with her foster parents and doing some family therapy. Her pre-adoptive foster parents were wonderful: patient, understanding, and very open to trying new things. They were able to be firm and loving, and learned to give Lucy choices so that the power struggles began to diminish. Lucy could let them have power, and not be annihilated. She also saw that she could trust these adults to be parents to her younger siblings, one of the issues that had caused her to fight with foster parents in the past. After less than 20 weeks of therapy (and countless games of checkers), Lucy finished therapy. Six months later, her adoption became final.

Over the years, I have become increasingly aware of the legacies we create as therapists and as supervisors. Many years after that first day in Myriam's office, I found myself attending a two-day supervision workshop with her. One of the presenters discussed his supervision style: How he worked with his supervisees, the kinds of questions he asked, the things he wanted

them to figure out. As he spoke, I realized that my style was very, very similar to his. Some of the things he said had been known to come out of my own mouth. It turned out that he had been Myriam's clinical supervisor. As he had supervised Myriam, she had supervised me. The types of questions he had asked her were the same types of questions she would use to guide me. And they, in turn, were the same kinds of questions I posed to my supervisees. I remember sitting there, realizing that I had "clinical ancestors" and that my supervision could influence generations of new therapists: my "clinical descendants".

Last year, as FAPT newsletter editor, I decided to create a new feature: a column where people could share their experience of how and why they became a Play Therapist. I wanted to create a place where we could honor and thank the people who have influenced and guided us, and where we could share some of the important lessons we've learned.

When we say goodbye to clients and supervisees, we usually don't get to see where their lives take them. Will that teenager fulfill her potential? Will that little foster child find a loving, permanent family? Will that young therapist continue on his current path, or will another influence start him on a new journey?

Sometime we have no idea the impact we have on others. We may be surprised at the power our relationships have. One of the pleasures of our work is the unexpected acknowledgment, the surprise thank you. The long-ago client who calls you out of the blue to say "I'm doing OK. You taught me so much." The young woman who you worked with years ago when she was 15, sending a Christmas card that says, "I have a husband and a baby and we're healthy and happy. Thank you."

This article is a note of gratitude to Myriam, who started me on this professional path. I doubt either of us had any idea that her question, "Do you have any toys?" would have taken me where it has. I hope that others will write to this newsletter, in order to thank their influences, acknowledge the people who helped them in their journey and assisted them in becoming a Play Therapist.

This is also a tribute to Lucy and all the children, teenagers, and adults who have taught me to be patient and listen, even though, as Lucy told me, "It's hard sometimes."

Lisa Saldaña, LMHC, RPT-S is the Immediate Past President of the Florida Association for Play Therapy and the President-Elect of the Association for Play Therapy.



APT MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The directory information provided below will, unless otherwise noted, appear in your annual Membership Directory listing. Please provide the information requested in each item.

"I wish to promote and support the field of play therapy by becoming a Member of the Association for Play Therapy, Inc. and the Florida Association for Play Therapy, Inc. Branch!"

Category: _____ Professional (Individual mental health professional)
_____ Affiliate (full-time student, parent, etc.)

First Name: _____ **Last Name:** _____

Degree/Designation _____ **Sponsor Name (not required)** _____

Branch: **Florida** SSN _____ - _____ - _____ (Confidential. Used only for identification purposes)

Business/Affiliation: _____

Address: _____ City _____ State: **FL** Zip: _____

Telephone (____) _____ - _____ Fax (____) _____ - _____ Email: _____

Annual Dues: Professional Members: APT: \$ **55.00** + Florida Branch: **\$20.00** = **\$75.00 Total dues**

Student/Affiliate Members : APT \$ **30.00** + Florida Branch **\$10.00** = **\$ 40.00 Total Dues**

___ Check/Money Order Credit Card: ___ Visa ___ MasterCard Acct. # _____

Expiration Date (mm/yy) _____ Signature: _____

Mail application with payment to: Association for Play Therapy; 2050 N. Winery Ave. #101,
Fresno, California 93703 Fax: 559-252-2297

**FLORIDA
ASSOCIATION
FOR
PLAY
THERAPY**



www.floridaplaytherapy.org

The Children's Psychiatric Center, Inc.
9380 Sunset Drive
Suite B-235
Miami, Florida 33173