



Play and play therapy

“Who would have thought there was a place like this in the whole world?” Child in play therapy¹

¹ Landreth G. (2012) Play therapy: the art of the relationship (3rd ed.) New York: Routledge

Free online courses, videos & websites

There are a number of excellent online courses, videos and websites available that you may find useful as a CFK volunteer. This list is not exhaustive so please let the office know if you are aware of any other courses, videos or websites. Please note that you are not expected to join all the courses or watch all the videos (unless you want to!). Rather you can select topics that you find interesting or would like to know more about from this resource.

Online courses

FutureLearn

[FutureLearn](#) offers a diverse selection of courses from leading universities and cultural institutions from around the world. These are delivered one step at a time, and are accessible on mobile, tablet and desktop or laptop, so you can fit learning around your life. Courses are divided into weeks, normally around six or more. These contain various activities that you should aim to complete within the week, each one built from a sequence of straightforward steps, to help you learn. However, as long as you join the course during these weeks, you can continue at your own pace, as most courses are available indefinitely. The advantage of the week-by-week approach is that you can engage in discussion with other learners, although you can still read other learners' comments at your leisure. Most courses tend to be repeated so do not worry if you miss a course, you can nearly always join it later.

Courses relevant to CFK include:

- Babies in mind
- Caring for vulnerable children
- Play

The following may also be of interest:

- Children in the digital age
- Psychology and mental health
- What is a mind?

Open2Study

[Open2Study](#) is the Australian equivalent of FutureLearn. It differs from FutureLearn in that you are expected to answer a 5-10 question assessment at the end of each module within a specific time, as assessments are only available for a short time. However, courses are repeated on a monthly basis and you can re-join from the start. Courses you may find interesting include:

- Early childhood education (introduces you to child development, including play, during the first five years of life)
- Foundations of psychology

OpenLearn

[OpenLearn](#) offers a selection of free online courses written by The Open University. These include:

[Attachment in the early years](#)

[Childhood in crisis](#)

[Exploring children's learning](#)

[Introduction to child psychology](#)

[Young people's well-being](#)

MindEd

[MindEd](#) is a free educational resource about children and young people's mental health for adults working with this client group in the UK, be it in a voluntary or paid capacity. The website contains a huge number of mini courses that typically take about 30 minutes and cover a very wide range of topics. You can follow a Recommended Learning Path tailored to your background or 'pick and mix' topics that interest you (or both).

Barnardos Ireland

A short online course that provides an introduction to [child protection](#). Whilst the government acts mentioned are not applicable to the UK, most of the rest of the course is relevant to those working with children in the UK.

KidsMatter

[KidsMatter](#) is an Australian mental health and well-being initiative. It is aimed at those working in primary schools or early years settings, as well as parents and other family members.

As an eLearning provider, they offer a short course on [helping children with mental health difficulties in the early years](#).

They also host a webinar about [the importance of play](#). This is quite long at just over an hour, so, if your time is limited, scroll to 9 minutes to cut out the preamble and listen until 31 minutes, as the remainder is largely about the role of educators in play.

Alison

[Alison](#) is an American-based global website with many different kinds of free online courses, includes two courses about children and young people that include modules about play, both written by the Open University:

[Diploma in children's studies](#)²

[Fundamentals of child and youth studies](#)³

Whilst not exactly a course, the book **Child and adolescent psychiatry (3rd ed.)** can be downloaded as a [PDF](#) (4.39KB) free of charge. This either can be read on your desktop/laptop or tablet, or sent to e-readers such as the Kindle. You can then answer hundreds of interactive [multiple choice questions](#) based on the book. There is no reason why you cannot attempt the quizzes without downloading and reading the book or relevant chapter first, as immediate feedback is given to each of your answers, but it does refer you to the relevant page in the book if you give the wrong answer.

² The play module is also available in [text only format](#) on the OpenLearn website

³ The play module is also available in [text only format](#) on the OpenLearn website

Videos - play

The importance of play

When thinking about the significance of play, it is important to take into account the views of both adults and children. 5 and 5½ minutes respectively

[Play experts](#)

[Young children](#)

In the third video, a psychologist speaks about [how young children think](#), including the notion that when children play they are actually conducting 'experiments' in order to form hypotheses about the world. It is also of note that she demonstrates how very young children are able to understand what others are thinking. 18½ minutes

Imaginary play

[The imaginary girl](#) is a powerful - and shocking - short film about a seven-year-old girl with warring parents. Each parent has a different view on play, with the mother believing a child of that age should not be engaging in fantasy play by herself in her bedroom. 10½ minutes

TED talks

[Ted talks](#) includes two talks about play. The first is about [the importance of play](#), presented by Stuart Brown. He tells of one severely play-deprived child who went on to be a mass murderer in America. He argues that play is not a rehearsal for adult activities. 26½ minutes

A contrasting talk by Tim Brown argues that [play is essential for creativity](#) and that children lose this as they grow up and the opportunity for free play is restricted. However, he also feels that children learn through play and that they act out adult situations in order to understand them. 28 minutes

Videos - play therapy

Carefree Kids

CFK has its very own YouTube Channel that includes this [introductory video](#) to CFK. In the second video, Ros Kane, the founder of CFK, talks about her '[brilliant moment](#)' when CFK was conceived and the work that it now does with troubled children. 3 and 3½ minutes respectively

Virginia Axline

Two video versions of PowerPoint presentations give concise overviews of play therapy including Axline's eight principals of non-directive play therapy. Axline's books – *Dibs in search of self* and *Play therapy* – are prerequisite reading before working with a child and volunteers can borrow them from the CFK library.⁴ 15 slides and 11 slides respectively

[Presentation 1](#)

[Presentation 2](#)

Garry Landreth

Much of the ethos of Carefree Kids is based on the work of Garry Landreth⁵, the father of non-directive or child-centred play therapy as we know it, and beyond that the work of Virginia Axline. The first video is an [interview](#) with him and his thoughts about play therapy. The second is a brief clip of the end of his [session with a young girl](#). You can watch a DVD of the full session in the library.⁶ 15½ and 6½ minutes respectively

⁴ CFK volunteers can join the library with a one-off returnable deposit of £10

⁵ Landreth's book *Play therapy: the art of the relationship* (3rd ed.) is also prerequisite reading before working with a child

⁶ CFK regularly run DVD viewing sessions during school holidays or the DVDs can be viewed in the Learning Centre by appointment

Introduction to play therapy

A brief [introduction to play therapy](#) by the **British Association of Play Therapy**. 3½ minutes

This is a slightly longer video than the one offered by the BAPT and, although some of it is purely about the **Association of Play Therapy of America** it introduces you to [the benefits of play therapy](#). 7½ minutes

Therapists at the Institute of Play Therapy in Missouri explain [how and why play is used to help children](#): play is their language and toys are their words. They speak of “the magic of the playroom”, how it helps children find a new way of being in a safe place and learn **self-control** and **making choices for themselves** as they develop a **trusting relationship with their therapist**. 5½ minutes

A video of [a role-play with two adults](#) playing ‘therapist’ and ‘child’. Despite using classic Landreth phrases such as “that can be anything you want it to be”, the ‘therapist’ seems to be more interested in her own play than that of the ‘child’. She also uses a ‘three strikes and you’re out’ rule, which CFK never use. To make matters worse, she does not tell the ‘child’ about this until the end of the session. 19 minutes

A brief, but clear example of [how play therapy helped a young girl](#) work through feelings about a recent event in her life in a way that she could not have verbalized. 7½ minutes

Toys used in the non-directive playroom

The first video, presented in two parts, introduces the different toys in the playroom and discusses how a child who has experienced [sexual abuse or other types of trauma](#) might use them. It recommends a wide range of toys including [sand trays and puppets](#). It stresses the importance of letting the child tell their story and not jumping to conclusions or interpretations. Please note that these videos are American and this particular play therapist has decided not to have gun toys in the playroom because of the American gun culture. CFK typically do advocate the use of toy guns. Both 10 minutes

The second video introduces you to the [toys in a playroom in the UK](#) and includes the use of aggressive toys such as guns and foam swords. It also introduces you to the therapeutic process that takes place in the non-directive playroom. 3½ minutes

Therapeutic skills used in the non-directive playroom

In the first of three videos presented by American play therapist Heather Thompson, she explains different **response** skills in the playroom. The first part gives examples as to [how to respond to a child](#) in certain situations. 7½ minutes

In the next two videos, she demonstrates the different therapeutic skills in practice, in this instance with a pre-school child. These include **facilitating esteem and encouragement, facilitating esteem and encouragement, reflecting, tracking, and limit setting** skills. 9½ and 7½ minutes respectively

[Demonstration 1](#)

[Demonstration 2](#)

In the first part of this video play therapist, Jonathon Altidor demonstrates the skill of **reflection** in a non-directive play therapy situation with a young boy. However, the second part is directive, aims to teach the child about rules and boundaries, and is not applicable to the work of CFK. 22 minutes

American play therapist Dr Amy Wickstrom tells the story about a young boy who played out an armed holdup he had witnessed over several sessions. The story demonstrates the importance of the therapist **following themes** across sessions and the changes in them until resolution. 3 minutes

Play therapy with abused children

An excellent video, presented in two parts, is **Essentials of play therapy with abused children** by Dr Eliana Gil, whose books are available to borrow from the CFK library. Dr Gil stresses the importance of watching a child's play over a number of sessions and not jumping to conclusions. 25 and 15 minutes

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

Play Therapy International World Congress 2010

Dr Mike Shooter, a child psychiatrist in the UK, discusses his work with examples from his clinical practice with particular reference to play. In five parts. 6, 6, 7, 7½ and 12 minutes respectively

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

[Part 3](#)

[Part 4](#)
[Part 5](#)

Dr Fraser Brown, a professor at Leeds Beckett University and course leader of the BA (Hons) Playwork, speaks about the therapeutic nature of play and the impact on child development. In three parts. 10, 10½ and 14 minutes

[Part 1](#)
[Part 2](#)
[Part 3](#)

General

Try to watch this short video before attending supervision. It is beautiful and affirms that everyone, from the very young to the very old, has his or her own [vulnerabilities and needs](#) that require expression. Remember, supervision is there to support you, as well as your work with children. 4¼ minutes

And finally, [how NOT to conduct play therapy](#) – in the child’s home, with the child’s own toys (in the main non-therapeutic toys such as a football game), with TV blaring in the background, parents wandering in and out and the younger brother spending increasingly longer periods of time in the ‘play room’ and with noisy toys. The therapist even has a conversation with the parents at one point and apparently has not explained to the child that the session is being videoed and why! 30 minutes

Videos – others

Children’s emotions

An Australian radio programme, part of the All in the Mind series, is about [children and their emotions](#). It introduces you to the importance of understanding children’s emotions, and ways to help them when emotions, such as anxiety, become a problem. Although play therapy is not mentioned, it is still an interesting introduction to children’s emotions. 30 minutes

Child mental health

In addition to the mental health course mentioned above, **KidsMatter** also have a series of

videos discussing [primary school children with mental health problems](#). Videos 4 and 6 are of particular interest to CFK volunteers. 5 and 4 minutes respectively

Podcasts

[Introduction to play therapy and the training involved](#)

Peter Ayling explains about how he discovered the discipline of play therapy during his social work career and subsequently became a play therapist. He describes his work with the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) for looked after children in Birmingham and the use of play therapy as a therapeutic tool within his work. 11 minutes

[Play therapy with children and adolescents: a conversation with Theresa Fraser](#)

An experienced play therapist talks about different play therapy techniques, both directive and non-directive, including sand play. 39 minutes

[Working with kids and play therapy: Dr Julie Ballinger and Dr David Huffman](#)

An excellent introduction, once the preamble is over, to non-directive play therapy based on the work of Gary Landreth. It includes introducing a child to the playroom, the importance of carefully selected toys, and limit setting. To skip the preamble, start listening at 11.40. 53 minutes in total

Useful websites

Play therapy

[Carefree Kids](#)

[Carefree Kids Facebook page](#)

[Follow Carefree Kids on Twitter](#)

[British Association of Play Therapy](#)

[Play Therapy UK](#)

[Association for Play Therapy \(United States\)](#)

Children in general

[Action for Children](#)

[Barnardo's](#)

[ChildLine](#)

[Children's Commissioner](#)

[Contact a Family](#)

[Coram](#)

[KidsMatter \(Australia\)](#)

[Kidscape](#)

[Mental Health Foundation - children and young people](#)

[National Children's Bureau](#)

[NSPCC](#)

[The Children's Society](#)

[Young Minds](#)

Further reading

NB All are safe to open if asked

[Carefree Kids volunteer handbook](#)

[Children understanding the world through play](#)

[Children's emotional development](#)

[Children's social and emotional development](#)

[Children's social development](#)

[Play: a collection of short papers about play. It includes the paper on play therapy listed below](#)

[Play deprivation: impact, consequences and the potential of play work](#)

[Play for today - a report about the importance and relevance of play](#)

[Play: mental health and wellbeing](#)

[Play therapy](#)

[TeenIssues](#)

[The right to play](#)

[Time to Mind](#): a manifesto for child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) by The Times newspaper

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