

Working with Parents of Child and Teen Clients: A Partnering Approach

DAYNA SYKES, LPC-S, MHSP, RPT

Learning objectives

- ▶ Understanding the importance of involving parents in the therapeutic process
- ▶ Recognize and overcome fear and avoidance that shows up in the therapist when working with parents
- ▶ Identify 3 ways to build a connection and partnership with parents of child and teen clients

About Me

-I am a Licensed Professional Counselor-Supervisor-MHSP, Registered Play Therapist (awaiting supervisor status), EMDR Certified Therapist and EMDRIA approved Consultant in Training (CIT), and TraumaPlay TM Certified Supervisor

-I started my career in agency work.

-When I moved to Private Practice, the last thing I wanted to do was work with parents.

-I am writing a Children's Book.

-I am a small town, farm girl.

-I am a basketball, baseball, softball, and cheer mom!

-I do not have a traditional family upbringing.

-I am Very passionate about parent work.



Meet Porch Chicken

Raise Your Hand If...



3 Descriptive Words

THINK ABOUT THE PARENTS
OF YOUR CURRENT CLIENTS...

WHAT ABOUT THE MOST
CHALLENGING PARENTS YOU
HAVE WORKED WITH...

THINK BACK ON SOME OF
YOUR MOST DIFFICULT
CONVERSATIONS WITH
PARENTS...

Common Themes:

- I don't like to work with parents because...
- I feel pressured to meet THEIR goals.
 - It's intimidating.
 - I feel triggered when they...
 - They have unreasonable expectations.
 - It's overwhelming.
 - I don't like confrontation.
 - I will upset them...make them mad at me.
 - It's so frustrating.

Imposter Syndrome

I don't have children of my own.

I don't know what I'm doing.

I am young.

I don't know anything about parenting.

Parents are an Important part of the therapeutic process



Children

Co-regulation
Communication
Nurture
Need Meeting



Teens

Co-regulation
Active Listening
Nurture
Problem Solving



Family

Delighting in
Communication
Sticking Together
Nurture



*When a flower doesn't bloom,
you fix the environment
in which it grows,
not the flower.*

Alexander van Heijer

Setting the Stage for Parent Work

- ▶ Parent Only Intake - Most Recommended
- ▶ Parent and Client: Dyadic, 50/50, 75/25
- ▶ How Do I Decide?

TEAMWORK
MAKES THE
DREAM WORK

Child Therapy Work

- ✓ Psychoeducation
- ✓ Dyadic play therapy sessions:
 - Teaching the parent tracking and reflecting
 - How to be playful
 - How to let the child lead the play
- ✓ Lots of modeling by therapist
- ✓ Limit Setting
- ✓ Giving Directives
- ✓ Safe touch and playfulness
- ✓ Delighting in the child

Teen Therapy Work

- ✓ Psychoeducation
- ✓ Dyadic sessions with parent and teen
- ✓ Lots of focus on empathy building
- ✓ Reminding the parent what it is like to be a teen
- ✓ Regular check-ins with parent- make sure you know what is going on in the system
- ✓ ...While maintaining the confidentiality of the teen
- ✓ ALWAYS communicating with the teen around the purpose of parent sessions
- ✓ Prep work with teen for dyadic sessions
- ✓ Competency Surges- help the teen gain the strength to communicate for themselves while you are there to support them

Parent Sessions

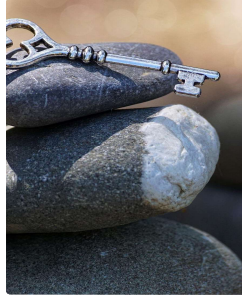
- ✓ Assess parent's own childhood history
- ✓ Attachment wounds
- ✓ What is it like to be the child of this parent?
- ✓ What is it like to be the parent of this child?
- ✓ How does the parent's history affect their ability to support their child?
- ✓ Psychoeducation
- ✓ 1 on 1 parent coaching sessions
- ✓ Parent Supported Therapy- EMDR, Trauma Work

Family Sessions

- The focus of a family session is to develop and strengthen attachment.
- Assist the family in activities that increase their ability to delight in one another.
- Foster communication; listening skills
- Practice with your client and parent first as needed before engaging in a family session.
- #1 goal is to protect the family system from further damage.
- I am teaching the family how to:
 - ❖ bring the hard stories into the room
 - ❖ hold each other's hard stories
 - ❖ admit and take responsibility for mistakes they make
 - ❖ communicate their needs
 - ❖ co-regulate
 - ❖ have fun with one another

Parents are the key

- We are temporary helpers.
- Parents are long-term caretakers.
- Parents KNOW their children, and they are the expert on their child.
- Parents are the story keepers and history takers.
- Parents are entrusting us to help their family.
- They just need the tools to support their child



*You cannot give
something you never
received.*

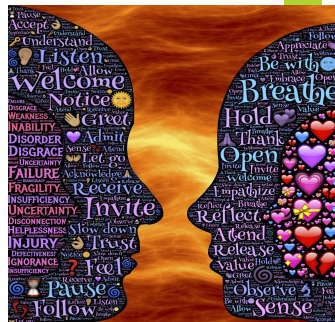
We, as the therapist, can pour into the parent in ways that help them expand and be able to hold the hard stuff.

[illegible]

Resentment

[illegible]

Brene' brown-
Daring Greatly

[illegible]

Countertransference & Transference

- ▶ "it IS the therapeutic landscape " (Lisa Dion, Lessons from the Playroom)
- ▶ "are always co-arising and co-constructing at the place where the therapist experience meets that of the patient" (Sebern Fisher, Neurofeedback in the Treatment of Developmental Trauma)
- ▶ It is always there, so what SHOULD you do with it?
- ▶ Checking our SHOULDs at the door...

Therapist's Role

Anchor
Coach/Trainer
Model
(TraumaPlay TM): Safe Boss
Storykeeper
Nurturer





"Where we are on our journey of living and loving with our whole hearts is a much stronger indicator of parenting success..."

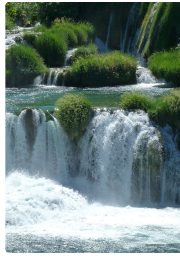
-Brene Brown, "The Gifts of Imperfection", p. xxv

Cascade of Care

How do you pour into yourself so that you may pour into others?

What needs to be met in order to be able to hold parents in the hardest parts of parenting?

How can you model compassion for self and compassion for others?



I would love to work with you!

www.daynasykespc.com

SUPERVISION & CONSULTATION SERVICES

Virtual Meeting via Zoom
Individual and Groups Available

Contact me by emailing:
dayna@daynasykespc.com
Or
Visit my website to sign up



Dayna Sykes

Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor
Mental Health Service Provider
Registered Play Therapist
Traumatology Certified Supervisor
EMDR Certified Clinician
EMDR Approved Consultant in Training

Resources

A few things I discussed today that you might want more information about...

1. Play Therapy Training and Credentials- for information about how to become a Registered Play Therapist or to find training visit <https://www.a4pt.org/>
2. TraumaPlay Training & Certification- Visit the TraumaPlay Institute <https://www.traumaplayinstitute.com/>
3. A great book to support your parent work...
Parents as Partners in Child Therapy: A Clinician's Guide by Paris Goodyear-Brown
<https://www.amazon.com/Parents-Partners-Child-Therapy-Clinicians/dp/1462545038>
4. Become an EMDR Therapist
<https://www.emdrta.org/>
