

## Play therapy in Preschool children with Autism

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Introduction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Play is pleasurable, intrinsically motivating, process-oriented, freely chosen physical or mental activities in which the child actively engages spontaneously, mainly in a safe environment.</li> <li>Play is impaired in children with autism due to difficulties in sensory processing and impairment in social communication.</li> <li>Play therapy may help children with Autism to express themselves and reducing unwanted behaviors.</li> <li>Floor time therapy, Integrated play therapy groups, Joint attention symbolic play and regulation ( JASPER), Synergistic Play Therapy (SPT). Equine partnered play therapy are the various forms of Play therapy studied.</li> <li>The Purpose of this study is to explore if Play therapy modulates the symptoms of Autism and its applications in preschool children with a diagnosis of Autism.</li> </ul>
Methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A search was conducted in National Center for Biotechnology at the U.S. National Library of Medicine.</li> <li>60 Citations were found ranging from 1970 to 2023. 7 free full-length articles were included in this review.</li> <li>53 were excluded for the following reasons</li> <li>11 had No of children &lt; 10.</li> <li>10 required subscription/ not accessible.</li> <li>6 were in different languages.</li> <li>10 had no abstracts.</li> <li>3 were case reports.</li> <li>3 were review article.</li> <li>3 had an age range different from preschoolers.</li> <li>3 were on body image perception</li> <li>1 on imaging protocol in children with autism</li> <li>1 was on joint attention</li> <li>1 excluded children with autism</li> </ul>

Title and Author	Synopsis
Wang YX, et al ( 2019 )  Clinical efficacy of interactive group sandplay versus individual sandplay in the treatment of preschool children with autism spectrum disorder	80 children with autism 4 to 6 years old were assigned to experimental and control groups. Experimental group joined group sand therapy with typically developing children at a ratio of 1- 3 and control group had individual sandplay with therapist 1 on 1. The Autism Behavior Checklist (ABC) and Autism Treatment Evaluation Checklist (ATEC) scores improved in both groups more so in the experimental group. The experimental group had more social interaction with typically developing peers contributing to enhanced mood, perception and less stereotypic behavior.
Liu GH, et al (2019)  Clinical effect of Integrated Sand therapy in children with Asperger Syndrome (AS).	44 children with Asperger syndrome (AS) were randomly assigned to 2 groups. Control group received Structured education with Sensory integration therapy. Experimental group used box court sandplay therapy which included children with AS and those without AS (typically developing peers). After 6 months, children in the experimental group had lower social responsiveness scale scores than the control group.
Liu GH, et al (2019)  Curative effect of progressively integrated sandplay therapy on core symptoms and sleep management in preschool children with mild-to-moderate autism spectrum disorder	50 preschool children with autism were divided into experimental and control group. Control group had structured education and auditory integrated therapy. Experimental group had a mix of children with autism and typically developing peers. They were gradually introduced to integrated sandplay therapy to develop an intentional play therapy method..The stepped box court therapy improved social communication,,language and sleep status of children with autism.
Fletcher-Watson S, et al (2016).  A trial of an iPad™ intervention targeting social communication skills in children with autism.	This study included 54 children less than 6 years old with a diagnosis of autism. The app aimed to enhance joint attention and real-world social communication skills. This study revealed no significant benefits between the control and experimental groups.
Wing-Chee So et-al (2020)  A Robot-Based Play-Drama Intervention May Improve the Joint Attention and Functional Play Behaviors of Chinese-Speaking Preschoolers with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Pilot Study	Chinese speaking preschool children with Autism were randomly assigned to intervention group n=12 and waitlist control group n=11.They watched three robot dramas and engaged in role plays over 9 weeks. There were significant improvements in joint attention and functional play in the intervention group.
Tllmont Pittala E et al.(2018)  Clinical outcomes of interactive, intensive and individual (3i) play therapy for children with ASD: a two-year follow-up study.	This study explored the 3i method in 20 children with Autism and followed over 24 months. The children received an average of 4 hours of 3i therapy per day. VABS (Vineland Adaptive Behavioral Scale), Communication and Social scores and Nadel Imitation Score significantly improved, and CARS (Childhood Autism Rating Scale) and ADI-R (Autism Diagnostic Interview-Revised) scores significantly decreased over two years.
Brefort E et al., (2022)  Two year follow-up of 90 children with autism spectrum disorder receiving intensive developmental play therapy (3i method )	Retrospective study evaluated changes in CARS and ADI-R in children receiving 3i intervention between 2013 and 2018. 90 children were included, and each child received 20-30 hours of play therapy/week. There was significant reduction in ASD severity with improvement in interaction, communication and repetitive behaviors.

### TOP 5 POSITIVE PLAY THERAPIES TO HELP YOUR CHILD WITH AUTISM

- 1. FLOORTIME**  
 The goal is to create a back-and-forth interaction between the child and adult to increase communication and add new aspects to play.
- 2. INTEGRATED PLAY GROUPS**  
 This type of play therapy gives a child a lot of opportunities to interact with peers and improve their social skills.
- 3. J.A.S.P.E.R.**  
 The child meets with the therapist for one-on-one sessions, and sometimes this type of therapy is offered at preschools for children with special needs.
- 4. THE P.L.A.Y. PROJECT**  
 This technique involves early diagnosis and intervention, 25 hours a week of therapy, one-to-one interactions between parent-teacher and child, and fun and engaging play at each level.
- 5. NON-DIRECTIVE PLAY THERAPY**  
 Growing trust and attachment, greater independence, and engaging in more imaginative play are all observed in the child after non-directive play therapy.

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Conclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Of the limited literature review performed there was significant improvement in the symptoms of Autism based on the intensity of the play therapy. We need more studies here in our country on the impact of play therapy in preschoolers with Autism.</li> </ul>