

Use of play therapy in the novel dibs in search of self by virginia m. axline

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Play Therapy Children are more at ease when they express their emotions in a form of play. This is not only true for children that have form of difficulty in expressing themselves but true for all children. Children express, happiness, aggression, love, passion, management skills, play is just a natural form of expression for all children. A self-initiated spontaneous play is the easiest way for a child to express himself more completely and directly (Landreth, 2012).

As play is an effective form of communication for a child, it is extensively incorporated in therapeutic techniques, more commonly known as play therapy. Verbal communication is restrictive for children where they have to live up to some pre-decided standard (Landreth, 2012). Many children don't feel comfortable in that zone, and find comfort in play where everything is created in their own dimension. They create responses to objects, colors and shapes around them. They don't feel the pressure of living up to some standard in order to let out what they feel.

Play therapy is a perfect medium where conflicts can be resolved and feelings can be communicated with others. It only makes sense as to why toys are used for therapy sessions with children because toys are children's medium of expression. They don't have names for human emotions, only pictures of cartoons and toys to describe what they feel. For these reasons play therapy is such an effective tool for child therapy. As children play out there emotions, they learn new things, what was unfamiliar to them becomes familiar again (Landreth, 2012).

For children that have trouble in communicating or responding, play therapy

can help them tremendously. They don't have to go to clinics and answer the questions of psychiatrists. As an example, Virginia Mae Axline's book *Dibs in Search of Self* shows how it's done.

Dibs in Search of Self

The novel *Dibs in Search of Self* by Virginia Mae Axline is an excellent example of how play therapy can be used to help children that display non-social behavior or other symptoms of this sort.

Dibs is the main character of the novel and Virginia remembers the time when she first saw him, not wanting to go home when it was home time. Dibs frequently shows non-social behavior; doesn't make eye contact, doesn't respond to a question. The problem lies not in categorizing him a retard because he is not, sometimes he does show brilliance. The matter gets worse as time progresses and the school decides to strike off his name from school roll. In a meeting, a teacher suggests to Dibs' mother that she should try play therapy for him. Dibs is put to observation in the school, where he starts interacting with the objects around him, starting off by reading a book when he is alone.

Miss A, Dibs' observer is the first person he actually connects as he holds her hand tightly when she takes her to the play room. He starts trusting her and expresses himself more. He starts responding to Miss A's voice and first time utters a comment at a toy. He examines the doll house and says, " No lock doors...Dibs no likes locked doors" (Axline, 1969, p30).

Things don't always go smooth with Dibs during play therapy as he sometimes refuses to obey and disregards warning for a play time being over. However improvements starts showing as he interacts with toys and

objects of the room with more interest. He starts completing small tasks like building a tower of blocks, putting colors in order at easel, reading labels, making a color wheel, painting etc.

These play therapy sessions continue under supervision and Dibs starts behaving like normal people like reading signs on the door, and complying with the demands of his teacher and mother. The therapy sessions continue and Dibs starts asking questions about things, other children and even God. And after two and a half years, Dibs has his last session and later frames the date.

Works Cited

Axline, V. (1969). *Dibs in search of self*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company

Landreth, G. L., (2012). *Play therapy: The art of the relationship*. New York, NY: Routledge