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President's Message

Athena A. Drewes, PsyD, RPT-S



Just think just five more weeks and spring is officially here...on paper at least! For all of you who have been shoveling snow and missing work days due to it, I hope this newsletter will help to give you a lift! It WILL get warmer soon and we will get through this deluge of snow and ice! In the meantime we can think about and look forward to our upcoming **16th Annual New York Association for Play Therapy Conference at the Desmond Hotel and Conference Center in Albany, New York.** Mary Anne Assini, Conference Chair, along with Hilary Sutliff and her committee are working hard to make this a fun and educational conference!!!!

This year we will be offering a two hour pre-conference Supervision workshop: *"Play Therapy Supervision: Playful and Reflective"* with Dr. David A. Crenshaw, RPT-S and myself from 7-9pm on Thursday, March 19th. This workshop will help meet the needs of RPT/RPT-S who need to renew their registration. APT requires 6 hours of play therapy supervision training for each renewal period (three years or 2 CEs per year). Those who register separately for this workshop will receive a certificate for two CEs in play therapy.

Dr. Rick Gaskill will give two days of training on Friday, March 20th and Saturday, March 21st entitled "Neurobiology Informed Play Therapy: Improving Client Outcomes". He will give an overview of Dr. Bruce Perry's Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics and how it can be applied to play therapy treatment. All registered participants will receive 12 hours of play therapy specific training and CEs included in their registration fee. A separate certificate for each day (6 CEs) will be given out. Included in your registration fee will be lunch each day, continental breakfast, refreshments in the afternoon, and ice cream social on Friday right after the training.

In addition, we are happy to be able to offer New York CEs for Social Workers. Working with Linda Lakeman of the Institute for Continuing Education SW CPE, which has received NYS Provider Approval from the State Education Department for Social Work CEs, those social workers who need CEs can obtain them separately for a \$25 fee by filling out the forms we will have at the conference.

Also, we will have a poster session for those who wish to submit research or a special technique they would like to share. Those individuals who submit a poster presentation will receive a one-day free registration for Friday. Please submit poster session requests to me (adrewes@hvc.rr.com).

We are also looking forward to having the Self-Esteem Shop with us again...so make your shopping list up for play therapy toys, puppets, miniatures and the latest books! Our conference committee will also have raffles during lunchtime of donated items from the Self-Esteem Shop and donated books from our talented members, as well as special raffles for various play therapy items. The raffle monies go toward offering scholarships to the conferences for students and NYAPT members.

So do NOT MISS OUT ON A ONCE IN A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY!!! Attend our March 19-21, 2015 NYAPT Conference with Dr. Rick Gaskill by registering as soon as possible on our website, www.newyorkapt.info! And spread the word to colleagues and friends, who will otherwise miss out in getting all this wonderful training information! Be sure to register at the Desmond Hotel and Conference Center, 660 Albany Shaker Road, Albany, NY 12211 at our special conference rate. Call the hotel directly at: 518-869-8100 and be sure to mention NYAPT to get the special rate. The rooms are going fast and will not be available much longer! If you would like to attend the 2015 conference for FREE the registration form is attached if you would like to obtain a scholarship or be a volunteer! Be sure to send it in soon in order to be eligible for consideration!

Elections: Please be sure to vote for our slate of officers! We are having voting electronically this year in order to help get more members to participate! See the attached information!

Gold Branch:

We need your help in order to maintain our status as Gold Branch. The major help is in getting new members to join and regular members renewing their membership! By renewing or joining before March 19th you are eligible for the reduced registration fee. So please hand out brochures, encourage friends and colleagues to join, so they can get the discount rate at our annual conference, along with all the other great benefits! For each brochure that you put your name down as 'sponsor', you receive \$10 APT Bucks for a full member and \$5 APT Bucks for Affiliate members. You can use these APT certificates to lessen your annual membership fee or conference fee at the national APT conference (as well as in their book store)!

Welcome New Members: Sarah Goldman, Donna Selner, Patricia Fearing, Nicole Passino and Jill Cedar!
Welcome to NYAPT! Keep safe and warm with all this ice and snow! Looking forward to having play time with you in Albany at our conference!!

Athena
President

Grist for the Mill of the Play Therapist



Submitted by: David A. Crenshaw, Ph.D., ABPP, RPT-S

I want to thank Dr. Eliana Gil for her gracious and generous sharing with all of us in NYAPT by adding her thoughts about the last ten years since the 2005 interview including her decision to enter semi-retirement. Eliana we are incredible grateful to you for your rich insights and clinical wisdom and your heartfelt sharing of self.

Reflections on my words written in 2005

Dr. Eliana Gil

It's always fascinating to look back and review something you wrote many years prior. Of course you hope that you didn't embarrass yourself promoting any ideas that are now considered to lack relevance. But the reality is that all of us can hope that our ideas are constantly evolving, that we are learning more, and that we are consistently testing and re-testing those tenets we hold to be true. I think I have great conviction in my ideas until proven wrong or shown that something else can be added. The treatment model I have always valued is integrative, because it allows you to constantly add, or complement, the work you already do.

It was interesting to read my first response to the question of how I got interested in working in the field of child abuse and neglect and to see that I talked about culture and religion. This year my high school teacher died suddenly and it hit me like a ton of bricks. Her name was Sister Mary Frederick, but to me, just "Fred!" She allowed me to use that term of endearment with her. When I was a fairly lost and excitable 15 year old, she singled me out for special attention. She believed in me and showed me to see myself in a new, more positive light. She was a game-changer in terms of the complex and agitated adolescence I experienced, and I will never forget her gentle kindness. I now see that I wanted to be Fred to other youngsters, and that when I worked with children, she was the one I was channeling: Fred in all her glorious humor, persistence, and gentle patience. I loved her dearly and she helped me love myself and see myself as capable of giving to others.

David asked me about my influences. He and I have often paused to express our gratitude to our mentors.

This year, I attended the retirement party of Kathy Baxter-Stern. She is married to Tom Stern, who I talked about in the first interview, as someone who inspired me to be a therapist. But it was Kathy who made that dream possible. I had the opportunity to thank her publicly at her retirement party, but more importantly, to remember the many ways she made way for my growth and professional development. I began my work at the SF Child Abuse Council in 1973 as a secretary (after working first for Murray Bowen). Eventually, in 1975, Kathy was hired as Educational Coordinator and eventually became the Director of the Council. Kathy was incredibly generous to me: First of all, when I had ideas of my own, she gave me credit for those in Board meetings, even as I sat taking notes, invisible. She gave me writing and speaking opportunities because she saw that I could communicate passionately about the work I was doing.

When I opted to go to school, she allowed me to flex my schedule so that I could attend classes. She went way out of her way to help me and eventually promoted me to Administrative Assistant, Educational Coordinator, and Assistant Director. I honestly believe that had I not met Kathy, my education would have been cut short. She was one of the kindest, most generous women I have ever met and again, allowed my confidence and competence to flourish.

My work with metaphors has grown and expanded and more than ever I find that my mind wonders to this viable form of communication. I have integrated metaphor work in all my trainings and find a consistent theme of discovery and self-awareness as a result of using metaphors. This type of work appears to be less confrontational and more inviting. It is what David eloquently calls “evocative” work in which individuals are touched and moved to insight and action. Yet because the work has a miniaturized quality, it somehow feels more manageable, less intense, yet amazingly profound. That is why the issue of self-care in therapy has remained so critical to me. The reality is that the work we do is intimate, personal, and emotional in nature. This means that throughout a typical day we are faced with the pain, worry, anxiety, excitement, fear, or joy of others. We are often “holding” and containing emotions for our clients but that begs the questions, “where do all our feelings go? What do we do with them? How do they affect us?” In my experience, I learned that they do go “somewhere.” They are manifested in our irritability or short tempers; the extra drinks we take or the extra desserts we devour; they affect our energy level, our willingness to go out and move our bodies. Unprocessed emotions can develop into generalized anxiety or a low-grade depression that we don’t understand.

Self-care is one of the most important lessons for us all!! Without it, we may be paying a high price. So working with ourselves is critical and using expressive therapies is one of the simplest things we can do. It’s surprising that most of us counsel our clients to take care of themselves, cope better, manage everyday stressors head on, but we seldom take our own advice. This is one of the most important lessons to learn, as far as I’m concerned.

In terms of my clinical thinking in the most recent five years, I made a commitment to get training in the Neurosequential Model of Therapy developed by Bruce Perry and completed a two-year individual certification process. I also delved more deeply into Theraplay, Circle of Security, and the clinical use of the Mandala. I must say that Dr. Perry’s work is singularly important because it relates directly to the work that I do. Although I believe that I have always been attentive to children’s development, I must say that focusing on the development of the brain, and how trauma affects it’s development, was not a strong suit of mine in the past. But Dr. Perry offers a certain simplicity in theory and application that makes his work so relevant to what I do. Quickly, I understood that the interventions that we have provided to children all have merit. However, as he insists, it’s *when* you deliver specific interventions, which is most relevant. Over and over, in listening to his case consultations, it becomes clear that relational opportunities take precedent over techniques and that relational health can counter and mediate adverse experiences. Thus, his model is optimistic and clear. He and Dan Siegel have both promoted the plasticity of the brain and challenged the notion that trauma impact is without recourse. I love the trend towards optimism and relational connection that Drs. Perry, Siegel and many others have articulated and championed.

And that leads very naturally to a brief statement about evidence-based practices. I have witnessed first-hand the change in the clinical climate that has occurred in the last decade. I think I have stated before that I believe in change and I very much believe in research. However, I was accustomed to research studies being informative and providing guidance for clinical consideration and integration. The current approach seems heavy-handed to me and one that I am sure will bring great discussion.

But let me be more specific: I train and consult with hundreds of clinicians each year. I am in a unique position to hear concerns or questions about current trends in practice. The most central concern from clinicians who are in the trenches, is the authoritative way that they are being told that they must follow one specific treatment approach versus another! Yes, the evidence-based practices have empirical support; however, I don’t believe these practices were ever intended to be used with every single client regardless of age, gender, or culture. I also don’t believe that these “models” are to be applied in a rigid way. If they are, then where is the fidelity process to ensure that the model is being followed? I will add one more question that has bothered me for years: Are we now provided with guidelines to replicate the model that was originally tested through research? I can’t imagine that this is true.

There are some evidence-based models that had positive treatment outcomes that now have no resemblance to the models that were tested. In fact, some of these models become hybrids of what was researched because clinicians find that they need to be adapted and integrated into broader models of psychotherapy. I worry about the current climate, especially since insurance companies are now insisting on reimbursing only evidence-based models and because large agencies are insisting that their workers comply. The end result? Many have confided to me that they say they are doing evidence-based models but really they just do good psychotherapy and/or do components of what is evidence-based. To me this makes much more sense than trying to create mental health methodologies that take the clinician and/or the therapy relationship out of the equation. I wish I could fast-forward and see what happens in a decade because this seems to me to be one of those pendulum swings that will hopefully come full circle sooner than later.

Finally, I want to share something a little more personal and yet infrequently discussed and that is the topic of retirement. As most of you know, I am now in the process of semi-retirement. I work one day of week doing consultations and supervision and I host a conference in VA once a year (April 10-12, 2015). I continue as a full partner in Gil Institute in Fairfax, VA working remotely. I also continue to run Starbright Institute with some talented faculty. I will be providing some of the trainings in VA next year. I also still have commitments made in the past for conferences coming up in 2015 so I will be in LA and WY, and will definitely attend APT in GA this year. So here is what I know so far:

I still have to maintain a balance in my life but I'm now much better about it. Whereas before I likely had a 60/40 split about work/personal life, (60 work/40 personal), that is now reversed and maybe closer to work 25% and personal 75%. I believe this is likely how we were intended to live. However, I don't regret any of the work I did or the passion and devotion with which I did it. But these days I carefully pick and choose the projects that I want to undertake with a little more care. I have written a series of chapters in books that were satisfying, and David and I just "put to bed" our new book on Termination in play therapy. This book opened up all kinds of memories that made us both feel vulnerable and introspective about endings. As David points out, each of these small endings inevitably brings us to our own human ending and the impact of death on our loved ones. Perhaps it is because of this other unspoken topic (death and dying) that we approach the end of our work careers with trepidation. What I notice most frequently is the number of jokes that are made about retirement. When I went to find a retirement card for my friend Kathy, they were all based on jokes about aging. I am acutely aware how difficult the topics of aging and death are for all of us. And yet what I feel the most right now is gratitude. I look back and feel that I was blessed with a career that I did not plan. I was lucky that so many liked and respected me. Some of my words (written and spoken) seemed to have meaning and motivated others. People have been very kind with me and always told me what my work meant to them. What a blessing!! And although I could look back with regrets at my personal life taking second place to work, it was never neglected either, just not always prioritized. So now, without regrets, I can shape a life that is more devoted to my family and that allows me to be the best wife, daughter, sister, aunt, mother and grandmother that I can be. Caretaking my 96 year old mother is not without its' challenges, but the rewards are countless as well. I know once she passes away, I will look back at these efforts to improve her quality of life in her later years with great pride and it will be comforting to know I did my best.

I still love working, look forward to Wednesdays, and love reading new professional books and keeping on top of things. I just signed up to take yet another course on the Mandala. I get so excited about learning. And...I just purchased a system that will allow me to teach my own webinar. I am not the most tech-savvy person in the world and marketing has never been my strong suit, but I am looking forward to teaching again and hopefully there will still be an audience. I also have scouted the mental health clinics in my area and I have the strong urge to stop and visit and see if they need someone to work with children. So far, I have been able to resist this urge but we'll see what happens as time goes by. I am looking into volunteering with refugee children and doing some play activities with kids who don't speak English. I think that will be fun!

I have met a really great tennis community near my house and play tennis three or four times a week. I love tennis, always have, always will. My knees are feeling the increase in activity so I may need to pause to do some medical work but I hope to play tennis until I can't. We are now home sufficiently enough to get another little dog. This past year and half has felt so different without a dog. I have had a dog in my life since I was a child. Our next door neighbor got a puppy and we all fell in love with her so we decided to bring home one of its' little siblings. He should be coming home with us in February and that is exciting.

The grandchildren keep growing and only my daughter and grand-daughter (and son in law) has visited us and we've explored Disney World. I am hopeful that my son and daughter in law, and their children will also visit soon. Of course I keep encouraging my friends to come see me! My partners at Gil Institute are holding down the fort in great style. The business is doing very well and we have a terrific team of therapists, all devoted to their work and increasing their skills. Our work environment is everything I ever wished it could be. So I'm living a charmed life. And with friends like David and all the inspiration that he brings to our work, who could ask for anything more? My best to the NYAPT and I hope that 2015 is full of growth, humor, play, happy adventures, and generous self-care.

Volunteer to Run for a NYAPT Office Position:

- Election time for NYAPT officers is upon us. This year we have four open positions and we would like you to volunteer to run for a position or nominate a full member of NYAPT for a position. There are two Director positions, the Corresponding Secretary position, and the Treasurer position open for election. Those who run for a position must have had to complete the Association for Play Therapy's Leadership Academy at the time of being elected OR can complete Leader Academy training after the election. The next Leadership Academy will be held during the Fall of 2015. NYAPT will pay the \$75 fee if an individual needs to complete the fall training. In addition, an individual wishing to run in this election must be a full NYAPT member in order to be elected to an officer position. **Please contact Stephen Demanchick at sdemanc8@naz.edu by Sunday February 22nd, if you would like to run for a position.** Elections will be held through an online survey between February 27th-March 6th.

NYAPT Applause:

- Let's congratulate NYAPT member Nancy Riedel Bowers on her book, *Play Therapy with Families: A Collaborative Approach to Healing*, recently published by Rowman Littlefield!!
- Let's thank NYAPT member Laurie Zelinger for her You tube video called, "Explaining Ebola to Children" which she made after receiving call from Time magazine about how to explain it to kids. Laurie wrote to us, "It's kind of amateurish, but simple and reassuring so that kids would understand and not be afraid. Runs 6.5 minutes. Putting in the words " Explain" " Ebola" and "Children" should bring it up."
- Please send us your good news so we can applaud you in our next newsletter!

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