

FALL NEWSLETTER



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President's Message



Message from the President:

I hope this newsletter finds everyone well! I must admit that it seems unusual to write a letter for the fall newsletter when it is 90 degrees outside! I am sure, however, that fall will be upon us sooner than we know.

With fall comes the Annual Association for Play Therapy Conference. This year's annual conference is scheduled for October 4-9 at the Galt House Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky.

This is the link to the online brochure:

<http://www.a4pt.org/?page=2016AnnualConference>

Some of the highlights of this year's conference will include what is sure to be a wonderful keynote address by Eliana Gil, PhD, LMFT, RPT-S entitled "The Highs, the Lows, the Challenges, and the Rewards of Being a Play Therapist", an impressive selection of sectionals, a welcome reception and poster presentations, and an awards breakfast. The APT Foundation Board has also brought back theme raffle baskets this year.

The proceeds from this theme basket raffle will go towards helping to fund play therapy research and public education programs. These baskets will be on display, and tickets will be available for purchase, during the Welcome Reception on Thursday, Oct. 6, 6:30pm – 8:00pm. The winner must be present to win. NYAPT will be providing a basket for for this raffle. Please stop by and buy a ticket if you are able!

I am also hoping to coordinate a time for NYAPT members to get together. Please let me know if you are going to the conference and are interested in this.

Speaking of conferences- we are looking forward to having Terry Kottman, PhD, RPT-S as the presenter for our upcoming 2017 NYAPT Annual Conference.

Dr. Kottman will offer two full day trainings; one on "Family Play Therapy -Adlerian Style" and one on "Play Therapy Techniques for Working with Preteens and Teens". This conference will be held on Friday, March 24 and Saturday, March 25, 2017 at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel in Tarrytown. This year's conference committee is hard at work finalizing the details of this conference.

Please be on the look- out for the soon to be distributed "save the date" and conference brochures.

As always, please contact me with any questions, ideas or concerns. I am looking forward to hearing from you!

Playfully,
Mary Anne

Reflections **Mary Anne Assini, NYAPT President**

Fifteen years ago Sunday I was on the phone with the director of a local special education preschool program. Half way through the conversation she said to me "...do you know what is happening right now?". I didn't. When I did become aware, words could not express the feelings I had. Initial feelings of extreme anger were followed by intense feelings of sadness for the victims and their families and friends, pride and respect for the responders and gratitude for the outpouring of support.

I recall how NYAPT founder and past president, Dr. Athena Drewes, rapidly facilitated the presence of play therapists at Pier 52. I remember how Wendy Ludlow, LCSW-R, RPT-S quickly secured a training location in NYC. I remember how Heidi Kaduson, PhD, RPT-S and Rise VanFleet, PhD, RPT-S volunteered for, and provided, training to play therapists. I reflect on the countless ways that play therapists supported one another in their efforts to bear witness to, hold, and slowly begin to help provide a healing presence in the face of such unimaginable trauma.

On 9-11-2001 my own children were very young. About a week later my oldest son, who was almost five, told me that he and one of his best friends had decided they were going to "protect people" when they grew up. In the weeks that followed, even at the distance I am from the city, I watched children built towers and put "force-field spray" around them. I listened to other play therapists describe their experiences of watching children become protectors, rescuers and healers within their play. I recall feeling humbled and so much in awe; of the resiliency of those impacted and the dedication of those responding. It made, and continues to make me, proud to be able to say I am a New York State play therapist. Thank you all for all you do!

Play therapy adventures in China: “It’s a small world after all...”**Ann Beckley-Forest, LCSWR, RPT-S**

When my husband and I made our plans to move the family for his sabbatical year as a visiting professor in Beijing, China, I was excited to have a sabbatical for myself as well. Putting my private practice on hold was an agonizing decision, but it would give me a year to read all those play therapy books on my list, do some writing, not to mention learn Chinese and enjoy the local culture. I also had an invitation to do some play therapy training in Singapore, through an APT connection there. But my great interest in China prompted me to try to see what I could learn about the state of play therapy and children’s mental health there.

Living abroad in the past had taught me the value of making even small, “friend of a friend” connections, so I was able to take advantage of professional association contacts in the trauma world and play therapy world. My email and CV had passed through three different people before I got a reply from Dr. Jing Liu. She and her colleagues were very excited about my play therapy experience and invited me for a tour of their facility – which turned out to be the Mental Health Institute of Peking University, and was located only a 20 minute bus ride from the campus where my husband was teaching and where we were living. This was an inpatient and outpatient facility serving both children and adults in separate divisions, and one of a handful of “full service” mental health facilities in China.

What I learned during my time there and during subsequent visits, was that a lack of access was one of the key barriers hampering the further development of mental health care there. They had a faculty of highly trained specialists, and most psychotherapy was being offered by either psychiatrists, psychiatric residents or a handful of psychologists, many of whom had spent time at very prestigious institutions in the US, Australia or the UK. For 1.4 billion people, there were really only a dozen or so such facilities in the whole country, mostly in the big cities. This shortage of care has led to severe limits on the number of sessions clients can be seen, as well as reliance on medication. These centers have tended by necessity to specialize in pervasive disorders such as autism, severe depression and schizophrenia, without being able to do much of the kind of early intervention in trauma, family problems, and treating anxiety that make up the bulk of my practice back in Buffalo. Unlike the US, where most of the practitioners in the psychotherapy “infrastructure” are Masters-level clinicians, in China there is not really a service delivery continuum in mental health. There is also a strong cultural stigma association with mental health care, including a history in the earlier part of the century of psychiatric treatment being used oppressively for political ends.

My hosts informed me that China now has a national priority to improve the quality and availability of mental health care and they were eager to collaborate since I was “in the neighborhood” and had experience as a trainer with the Child Trauma Institute.

Over the course of my year in Beijing I returned to the Institute at Peking University to deliver lectures in play therapy for the staff and psychiatric medical residents, and ultimately collaborated on a 3 day national symposium on incorporating play therapy in the diagnosis and treatment of children. This year I was able to return for a two week visit for the second year of the symposium and bring my colleague Annie Monaco to present together with me on using play therapy for treating trauma, disrupted attachment, and dissociation.

Some of my colleagues here have asked me how it was different to give a play therapy training in China versus the US. Of course there were challenges to overcome --the primary one being language-- since my Chinese is sufficient to introduce myself or order a meal, but not at all adequate to talk about play therapy. Fortunately the hospital was willing to invest significant resources in translating all my slides and having a very skilled interpreter for each session. My husband's students helped to add subtitles to my training videos, which was really important to help the trainees see play therapy in action. The Chinese educational system is more formal and lecture based than ours, so promoting interaction and encouraging questions and sharing proved a bit of a challenge, but once the expectations were clear, the trainees became very enthusiastic about playing and learning together.

In fact, the most striking part about sharing play therapy with my Chinese colleagues was not the differences – it was how familiar it all felt: a room full of warm and intelligent professionals, with passionate hearts for children, huddled over their sand trays grappling with all the themes my US trainees and students have wrestled with: how to be truly child centered, how the environment makes the play therapy relationship possible, how to engage through story and metaphor and game to make sharing thoughts and feelings and ultimately learning and growing feel safe for kids.

When Annie and I were in Beijing in June, I had the chance to reconnect with some trainees from the original cohort, and the best reward was to hear their stories of how they have been incorporating play into their work. They shared photos of their play therapy spaces and oohed and aahed over each other's latest toys, like the coffee break at any NYAPT conference. On the final day of this year's symposium one psychology grad student presented a case in which it was clear she had used art and sand play to help a very ill young woman make an initial disclosure and begin to heal from her history of abuse. Afterwards this grad student said to me in an email – “this play therapy – it has changed everything about how I approach my younger patients.”

Hmmmm...that sounds just like something you or I would say.... It's a small world after all.

Regional Training News:

- Check out the **Advanced Certificate Program in Play Therapy** at Brooklyn College. For more information:
<http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/academics/centers/childadult/projects/play.php>http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/courses/acad/program_info.jsp?major=553&div=G&dept_code=33&dept_id=526#553
- From **David Schatzkamer**, a free independent group opportunity for New York Play Therapists



Are you looking for a place where you can network, consult with, and connect with other play therapists in your area?

Who: Play Therapy Professionals of
the New York Metro area

Where: Brooklyn, NY

When: We meet once a month
(Location TBA)

For more information: Please email David Schatzkamer,
LMHC, RPT @ dschatzkamer@aol.com

*This is a free service for play therapists who are in the New York Metro area.
Criteria for participation in the group is to be a licensed mental health professional
(in any discipline) practicing play therapy (in any work setting).

Connect to NYAPT!

NYAPT Communications works on connections to members, social networking, the newsletter, soliciting discussions and interactions, and sharing information with members. If you are interested in submitting training information, an article, news, or words of wisdom please contact Jillian at JillianEKelly@gmail.com



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Check out the Association for Play Therapy at: <http://www.a4pt.org/>



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