



May 24, 2022

As I sat down to gather my thoughts about the mass shooting at the Tops grocery store in Buffalo, another mass shooting occurred in our country. The New York branch of the Association for Play Therapy stands against racism, hate, and violence against children in all forms. Public spaces are intended to be safe and welcoming, and crimes in public spaces shatter our sense of safety and strike terror in the hearts and minds of innocent people. This type of violence can lead to increased anxiety, causing some to fear going out to grocery stores, schools and other places of public gathering that should be safe.

As a professional organization dedicated to the mental health and wellness of children, our members recognize that the effects of violence can lead to traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, and other serious psychological conditions. In these shootings, guns were used to undermine our social structure in which safety is a core value. While it is too early to know the motives of the shooter at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, TX, we know that the shooter at the Tops Market in Buffalo was motivated by antisemitic and racist ideology. It is a fundamental value of all helping professionals that we take action to reduce violence and wholeheartedly work to promote cultural humility and improved understanding between people from majority and minority racial groups. We should turn our pain into action and find ways to improve the wellbeing of children and families in our communities. Finally, we believe that caregivers concerned about the wellbeing of children should consult with a Registered Play Therapist, someone who has advanced training in using play to help children and families manage the feelings associated with the recent violence.

The New York branch of the Association for Play Therapy is currently considering how we might join efforts to help those affected in Buffalo to heal. We realize that healing is an ongoing process often affected by access to trained clinicians, affordability, and proximity to service locations. We are looking to support BIPOC child therapists to obtain play therapy training and supervision. As members, you are invited to share your ideas, as well, by contacting the President or President-Elect. In the meantime, members who wish to give financial support may consider funds such as the Buffalo 5/14 Survivors Fund or the Buffalo Together Fund. The Uvalde, TX families have verified fundraisers through Go Fund Me and the Texas Association for Play Therapy is organizing supports in collaboration with the Self Esteem Shop.

Sincerely,

Gabriel I. Lomas, Ph.D., RPT-S
President
New York Branch - Assoc. for Play Therapy

Susan Bundy-Myrow, Ph.D., RPT-S
President-Elect
New York Branch - Assoc. for Play Therapy