



## Welcome to Synergetic Play Therapy

### Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the basics of Synergetic Play Therapy including the tenets, the history, and the main play therapy influences
2. Explain how children use the projective process in play therapy to set the toys and the therapist up to feel how they feel
3. Assess and explain the significance of why authenticity is so important in the playroom
4. Describe how a SPT Therapist accesses (his/her/their) authentic self and deepens the child's therapeutic process

### What is Synergetic Play Therapy™? (Also known as SPT)

Synergetic Play Therapy (2008) is a research-informed model of play therapy blending together the therapeutic power of play with nervous-system regulation, interpersonal neurobiology, physics, attachment, mindfulness and therapist authenticity.

Its primary play therapy influences are Child-Centered, Experiential and Gestalt theories.

Synergetics (a term coined by physicist Buckminster Fuller) is the study of systems in transformation, with an emphasis on total system behavior unpredicted by the behavior of any isolated components.

Synergetic Play Therapy honors both the therapeutic powers of play, the science that governs relationship, and the development of the therapist, recognizing that it is ultimately **the interplay between these three systems** that support deep transformation for both therapist and child.

The word itself is also reflective of what is happening in the playroom and how integration and healing occurs. As the therapist attunes to their own internal systems and then attunes to the internal systems of the child, a union of systems occurs. In this union, a synergy forms, allowing for co-regulation to emerge. The co-regulation supports both the therapist and the child in their ability to move towards the uncomfortable thoughts, feelings, and body sensations that they would not have been able to move towards as easily on their own.

During this “synergy of systems”, therapist and child enter something akin to a “Synergetic field’ where right hemisphere to right hemisphere communication emerges, allowing for integration and transformation.

Although Synergetic Play Therapy is a model of play therapy, it's also referred to as **a way of being in relationship with self and other**. It's an all-encompassing paradigm that can be applied to any facet of life, and subsequently any model of play therapy can be applied to it or vice versa. Synergetic Play Therapy is both non-directive and directive in its application.

The live Intro to SPT course focuses primarily on non-directive application as a foundation.

Notes:

## **Tenets of Synergetic Play Therapy™ (see handout)**

### **The Projective Process:**

- The projective nature of the mind is the brilliant capacity that we all have to see ourselves outside of ourselves. In other words, to look into a mirror. I need to be able to look outside of myself to be able to understand who I am.
- The mind projects its disowned parts onto people, objects, and toys. “Disowned part” means any part of me that I haven’t learned to love.
- We also project our un-integrated painful memories. Specifically, we project the parts of an experience that we haven’t been able to integrate into our lives, make sense of, or regulate through.
- In SPT, through the use of play and relationship, we are helping children integrate the disowned parts of themselves (positive and negative) and move towards the challenging memories, thoughts, and sensations that they perceive as painful so that they can integrate them into their lives.

### **The Set Up/The Offering:**

- The child sets the therapist up to feel how he/she/they feel - SPT Tenet
- The Set Up is not a manipulative process. It is an offering of brilliant information to help us understand what it feels like to be the child. The child’s mirror neuron system is looking for templates to copy and attempting to understand intention behind behaviors.

### Notes:

### **To Work On:**

1. Get curious about The Set Up/Offering, how others set you up, and how you set others up to feel.
2. If you are feeling courageous, try naming your experience out loud in the playroom just to see what happens.

### **Quiz Review: (True or False)**

1. Synergetic Play Therapy was birthed after an experience Lisa had with her daughter when she was 29 weeks pregnant.
2. Lisa’s original play therapy training was in Experiential Play Therapy.
3. Synergetic Play Therapy is both non-directive and directive.
4. A directive therapy approach is typically more challenging for therapists.

5. The word Synergetic means “systems in transformation.”
6. The therapist is not just working with the nervous system, but the perceptions of the events themselves.
7. The child’s play is an extension of their perception.
8. Attunement is not a necessary part of helping a child repattern their nervous system.
9. One of the ways children learn most is through observation.
10. Tenet 4 says we use mindfulness to encourage deflative awareness.
11. The child does not need a neuroception of safety to engage in reflective awareness.
12. The child’s symptoms are understood as states of a dysregulated nervous system.
13. Toys are the most important thing in the playroom.
14. Language is not required in the SPT process.
15. To understand the felt sense, the therapist notices how the child plays with the toys instead of just focusing on what toys the child is playing with.
16. Synergetic Play Therapy helps therapists get in touch with their authentic selves.
17. Shoulds are not one of the threats to the brain.
18. The cornerstone of all healing is attachment to self.
19. Attachment to self is a moment of regulation, mindfulness and awareness.
20. The set up or offering allows us to look beyond the words and behaviors to feel the child’s need to be seen and heard.