

SPT and Understanding Breath

How we breathe...from the atmosphere to the lungs and circulatory system and then to cells.

Draw lungs:

As air is inhaled through nose into chest it encounters the main airway leading to the lungs, trachea (located below the larynx and splits in to taking air to each lung). These airways, called bronchi, branch off like tree limbs on a tree, getting smaller and smaller in size. After about 15 branching levels they result in bronchioles and these end in air sacs called alveoli. Alveoli have very thin walls and here is where gas is exchanged.

Surrounding the alveoli is a network of tiny blood vessels, capillaries so thin that blood cells literally have to squeeze their way through.

Oxygen in the atmosphere moves from the nose or mouth down the trachea, through the bronchial system and into the alveoli. From there, the oxygen is absorbed into the bloodstream flowing from the capillaries surrounding the alveoli.

For this to take place properly, there needs to be a balance between the amount of blood flowing within the capillary to absorb the oxygen and the amount of oxygen brought to the alveoli by breathing.

Why is this important? The blood is not evenly distributed in the lungs because of gravity and body position, so the lower part of the lungs tends to have more blood

BUT it is the upper part of the lungs that gets the most amount of oxygen. This gas exchange is impacted greatly by how we breathe

1. Paradoxical breathing- shock, intense fright- chest expands while abdomen contracts= over time turns into chest breathing and small stress can cause an anxiety reaction.
2. Diaphragmatic breathing- Brings more oxygen into the lungs and thus to the blood stream. Crocodile pose- on tummy with arms crossed – forehead on arms. Research shows that if you practice this 10 times a day for 2 months you can change your breathing patterns.



Growing Up in Play Therapy Developmental Stages in Synergetic Play Therapy

In Synergetic Play Therapy® it is rare to begin the play therapy process with a child in the last 3 stages, as the success of the last three stages are influenced by the first three stages. Typically a child enters the last 3 stages during the empowerment phase of the play therapy process when their emotional age becomes more aligned with their chronological age.

Do I exist? In-utero - first few months of life

- o Often no language or eye contact
- o Spacey and not grounded feeling in the room
- o Often child stays in one spot and plays with only one or two things
- o Therapist will often question the significance of his/her/their existence in the room due to child playing alone and not interacting
- o Therapist often completely ignored
- o Feeling of hypo-arousal in the room
- o Hard to mobilize energy
- o Therapist often feels like he/she/they are in a fog

Is the World OK? Birth - 18 months

- o Play focuses on the unpredictable and scary nature of the environment
- o Therapist is set up to feel unsafe and not be able to trust what is happening around him/her/them
- o The therapist might be the witness to scary things occurring in the environment or might be an active participant in the play
- o Often the play is emphasized with hyper-arousal and anxiety

Am I OK? 18 months-3 years old

- o Play focuses on the therapist not feeling ok about him/her/their self
- o Therapist is set up to feel insecure, wondering what he/she/they did wrong, inadequate, like a failure/not good enough

How much can I do? 3-6 years old

- o The emphasis is on quantity instead of quality

How well can I do it? 7-11 years old

- o The emphasis is on quality instead of quantity unless it is about mastering something

Types Of Play

Age	Play Type	Explanation Of The Stages Of Play During Child Development
0-2 Years	Solitary	The child plays alone. There is limited interaction with other children.
2 to 2.5 years	Spectator	Observe other children playing around them but will not play with them.
2.5 to 3 Years	Parallel	Play alongside others but will not play together with them.
3-4 Years	Associate	Starts to interact with others in their play and there may be fleeting co-operation between in play. Develops friendships and the preferences or playing with some but not all other children. Play is normally in mixed sex groups.
4 – 6+ Years	Co-operative	Plays together with shared aims of play with others. Play may be quite difficult and the child is supportive of other children in their play. As they reach primary school age, play is normally in single sex groups.

Age Stages Of Play During Child Development

0-6 months

- * Looks at adults closely.
- * Put things into mouth and touch things with their hands.
- * Plays alone with toys... for instance... rattles, shakers and banging things with both hands.

6-12 months

- * Explores through the mouth and hands by touching objects.
- * Looks at and imitate adults.
- * Copy movements... for instance dropping objects.
- * Likes simple games... for peek-a-boo.
- * Explore toys alone.

12-18 months

- * Learns through trial and error for instance banging two objects and finding out the sounds it makes.
- * Repeat actions that they have enjoyed.
- * Starts to play with grown-ups and notices other children.
- * Plays and 'talks' alone.

18 months- 2 years

- * Explore things with their mouth.
- * Learns through trial and error.
- * Copies other children and adults.
- * Looks at other children playing but does not join in the play.
- * Likes playing with adults as well as by themselves.
- * Likes repetitive actions such as putting objects in and out of boxes and scribbling on many pages.

2 – 3 years

- * Begins to use symbols in their play such as a stick becoming a sword.
- * Starts to play alongside other children.
- * Starts to show some reasoning skills... may still learn by trial and error.
- * Copies adults and other children.
- * Much of his play is 'imaginative' for instance telling off toys.

3 - 4 years

- * Recognizes shapes, letters and colors.
- * Solves jigsaw puzzles through mixture of thinking and trial and error.
- * Plays co-operatively together and take turns with other children.
- * Shows more reasoning skills and asking questions for instance 'why' and 'how'.
- * Plays imaginatively for instance playing in the home-corner, dressing up and cooking.

4 – 6 years

- * Begins to use and understand symbols for instance writing and reading.
- * Shows much understanding and uses reason related to their experiences.
- * Begins to understand simple rules in games.
- * Plays co-operatively, taking turns and enjoying table-top games.

6 – 8 years

- * Enjoys playing with small groups and making up their own games with rules.
- * Enjoys playing co-operative games but not usually coping with losing.
- * Likes to play with children of their own sex.
- * Enjoys using rules and understanding.

**Developmentally “On-Track” & “Of Concern”
Traits in Children's Play & Behavior**

"On-Track" Traits:

- 1. Play and behavior contain a balance and diversity of themes/drivers (feelings, needs, and beliefs) over time**
- 2. Child can play and work equally alone or with others**
- 3. Child demonstrates a variety of cognitive and social types of play and behavior appropriate to their age**
- 4. Balance of verbal and non-verbal expression in play**
- 5. Play and behavior are developmentally appropriate given the child's age**

“Of Concern” Traits:

- 1. Limited types of play and problem-solving strategies**
- 2. Play, behavior, and cognitive abilities are not developmentally appropriate to the child's age**
- 3. Repetitive themes/drivers in play and behavior**
- 4. Plays and/or works mostly alone or must be in control**
- 5. Cannot initiate or sustain play without other's direction**
- 6. Overly aggressive or intense play/behavior**
- 7. Talks more than plays**
- 8. Little energy or interest in play activities**
- 9. Compulsive and/or perfectionistic quality of play or behavior**

A Synergetic Approach to Using Sand in Play Therapy

Lisa Dion, LPC, RPT-S

“The most important toy in the playroom is the therapist. The second is the sand.”
-Lisa Dion



18" by 27" with a rim 2" deep, made of wood

From a Synergetic Perspective...

- ◆ The sand tray represents the child's body
- ◆ The sand represents the e-motional and nervous system activation inside the child
- ◆ We don't put our hands in the tray unless we are invited to do so



SPT sand tools..... The funnel, sifter, scoop, baster, and container all simulate the flow of energy flowing through the child's nervous system.

SPT Sand Tools

- ◆ A child will play with the sand tools and the sand in a way that represents how their e-motions are flowing through their nervous system

Sand in Non-directive Play

Activating the Reptilian and Limbic Brain

"I have to pay attention to what is going on inside of me. I have learned to trust and make use of my own feelings and body sensations when I work with adults. In working with children, this aspect of the work is even more important for children are sensitive and very observant. If I pretend to look interested when I am bored, I rarely fool a child... she needs to know that when she looks into my eyes that I am telling the truth." - Violet Oaklander

Reptilian Area of the Brain

- ◆ You can use breathe, sound and movement to facilitate a child's process
- ◆ Don't stay quiet for too long-remember we want the child to process "in relationship"
- ◆ Don't assume that the sand feels good
- ◆ No story or interpretation! Stay with sensation.

Active Play in the Sand

The child sets the therapist and the toys up to feel how he or she feels

-SPT Tenet

Many therapists search for meaning and want to make it concrete rather than it being a process

Limbic Area of the Brain

- ♦ What are the feelings arising as a result of HOW the child is playing with the sand?
- ♦ What are the feelings arising as a result of HOW the child is placing the objects in the sand?
- ♦ Be in the process rather than trying to make it concrete and figure it out!

Scenes in the Sand

Sand in Directive Play

Activating the Pre-frontal cortex

Creative Interventions

- ♦ Child is asked to make a scene about a particular topic or child naturally makes a scene and then the therapist becomes directive.
- ♦ Child can either pick the toys out themselves or the therapist picks out specific toys and asks the child to use them
- ♦ Great for parent/child dyad work or family play therapy



SYNERGETIC
PLAY THERAPY™

Types of Reflections in SPT

* All reflections are authentic congruent statements in response to The Set Up in the child's initiated play and stories. It is important to use a variety of reflections with an emphasis on the use of Observational Statements. It is important to use a variety of reflections to promote regulation and integration in the child's brain as the child works through their challenging thoughts, feelings and sensations. Attunement is required for all reflections to have a regulatory effect.

Observational Based- Helps the child become aware of what they are doing while promoting a sense of "I am with you and tracking you".

Statements that are just the facts (the "obvious")

- Examples: The car is crashing into the house. Superman and Batman are fighting each other

"You" Statements (In SPT, the therapist refrains from statements telling the child how they feel such as "You are angry" unless it is obvious)

- Examples: You are working so hard to get that open. You really want to keep the castle safe.

Body Based- Helps the child become mindfully aware of what is happening in their own body.

Describe what is happening in your body

Use sound, breath and movement when needed for regulation

- Examples: There is a swirly feeling in my stomach. It is hard to take a deep breath.

Limbic Based- Helps the child feel "felt" and "understood" by the therapist. Also helps the child become curious about their own feelings.

Describe your own feelings

- Examples: I feel scared. I don't know how to feel right now when I watch them fight.

Cortex Based- Helps the child become curious about what is happening in their own minds.

Describe your mental faculty

- Examples: My brain feels foggy. My attention keeps wandering and I have to keep bringing it back.

Relational Based- Helps the child become aware of what is happening in the relationship itself.

Describe what is happening relationally between you and the client

- Examples: You are over there and I am over here. We are drawing together.

Understanding Art

Lisa Dion, LPC, RPT-S

It is important to be present throughout the entire process, not just wait until the end product

It is important to let a child know how much time they have when they start

If the therapist asks too many questions, the child may perceive the therapist as invasive and may not feel free enough to express

It is important to focus on the process of making the art- the set up, the feeling that emerged throughout

Development of Art

It is important to know the development of art in order to assess the emotional age/ developmental delays in the child.

Art involves 2 phases:

- 1) process (making the art)
- 2) product (completed art expression) - most therapists focus here

“For a lot of therapists if they do not have a lot of experience with art, they can have a tendency to look for specific characteristics that indicate problems or pathology rather than viewing the art as part of the process. They want to make it concrete in other words- Malchiodi

“Even if it turns out that one’s initial guess about meaning was correct, one should not assume that any image ‘always’ means something specific, nor even that its significance is invariant over time for any particular person.”

– Rubin

“It is important to take the stance of not knowing. Just like in the play process, we tend to “see” or “not see” things that are triggering to us. Therapists who have a hard time with self esteem may be challenged to see the “empowerment” signs of the process and only focus on “what is not working”. Same is true in art, get curious about what you attracted or repulsed to in children’s art- certain symbols, colors, etc. Our reaction to the different component of a child’s drawing will influence our interpretation.” Ex: How do we react to overt sexual images?

– Malchiodi

Art Trends in Play Therapy

Art Materials

The availability of art materials and the environment that the child is in while making art can influence art creation

Clay/play dough-highly kinesthetic, tactile, deepens child into their feelings; bridge between senses and feelings, able to be "controlled"

Emotional Experiences

According to Cathy Malchiodi, there are very few indicators at best that consistently indicate emotional problems.

Trauma

Children may paint pictures of their fantasy of how they want their lives to be. (Is their art consistent with all of the info that you know about the child? This will give you information about whether or not the art is a fantasy or how they really feel emotionally. May rip up or tear the paper instead of drawing on it.

Color is often limited- predominantly use black and/or red. Often they draw quickly/dedicating little time to details and the expressions are often simplistic like cartoons or doodles, repetition of images/symbols/lines may also be present. This may be a result of dissociation, withdrawn and frightened, emotional exhaustion, disconnected to their feeling body.

Sexual Abuse

There is not easily defined or definite list of indicators. Some are:

Strong sexual themes or imagery, inclusion of private parts, sexy dress, emphasized tongue, excessive make up, features convey seductiveness, incomplete body image. Can be emphasis of upper body with little detail in lower body, disorganization of body parts, humans may appear regressed.

Caution- surgeries, watching TV, etc can be other reasons for these images.

Art in Non-directive Play Therapy

We approach art as if it were another toy- what is the feeling that emerges as they relate to the art?
What is the Set Up and how do we support regulation?

The Nervous System in Art

Understanding "The Set Up"

Art in Directive Play Therapy

1. What is the goal?
2. Do you value art as a viable mode of expression?

Talking

Questions can be experienced as intrusive, child may not want to or the child may not know the answer

Asking a child "why" they drew something is usually unproductive. Instead make observation statements and wonder out loud.

Be aware that with directive, the child might view the task as a test.

Directive Art with Trauma

Children respond differently to perceived traumas. Some may want to draw/paint in full detail, other only tiny details. Some children may not remember, may feel scared to put it on paper, may not feel safe enough.

Caution: With sexual abuse, if asked to draw a person or body part, child may become disorganized and have difficulty.

Stay in the Process!

Stages of child art

As the child develops, their art passes through a number of stages. It is thought that all children pass through these stages.

Scribbling

From about their first birthday children achieve the fine motor control to handle a crayon. At first they scribble. The youngest child scribbles with a series of left and right motions, later up down and then circular motions are added. The child appears to get considerable pleasure from watching the line or the colors appear. Often however children do not pay attention to the edges of the page and the lines go beyond the confines of the page. Children are often also interested in body painting and, given the opportunity, will draw on their hands or smear paint on their faces.

Later, from about their second birthday, controlled scribbling starts. Children produce patterns of simple shapes: circles, crosses and star-bursts. They also become interested in arrangement and can produce simple collages of colored paper, or place stones in patterns. Once children have established controlled scribbling they begin to name their scribbles.

Pre-symbolism

From about age three, the child begins to combine circles and lines to make simple figures. At first, people are drawn without a body and with arms emerging directly from the head. The eyes are often drawn large, filling up most of the face, and hands and feet are omitted. At this stage it may be impossible to identify the subject of the art without the child's help.

Later drawings from this stage show figures drawn floating in space and sized to reflect the child's view of their importance. Most children at this age are not concerned with producing a realistic picture.

Symbolism

In this stage of a child's development, they create a vocabulary of images. Thus when a child draws a picture of a cat, they will always draw the same basic image, perhaps modified (this cat has stripes that one has dots, for example). This stage of drawing begins at around age five. The basic shapes are called symbols or schema.

Each child develops his/her own set of symbols, which are based on their understanding of what is being drawn rather than on observation. Each child's symbols are therefore unique to the child. By this age, most children develop a "person" symbol which has a properly defined head, trunk and limbs which are in some sort of rough proportion.





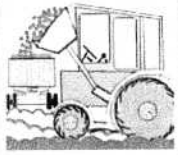

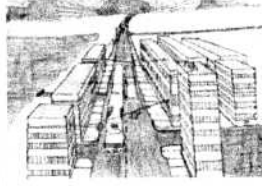

Before this stage the objects that child would draw would appear to float in space, but at about five to six years old the child introduces a baseline with which to organize their space. This baseline is often a green line (representing grass) at the bottom of the paper. The figures stand on this line. Slightly older children may also add secondary baselines for background objects and a skyline to hold the sun and clouds.

It is at this stage that cultural influences become more important. Children not only draw from life, but also copy images in their surroundings. They may draw copies of cartoons. Children also become more aware of the story-telling possibilities in a picture. The earliest understanding of a more realistic representation of space, such as using perspective, usually come from copying.

Realism

As children mature they begin to find their symbols limiting. They realize that their schema for a person is not flexible enough, and just doesn't look like the real thing. At this stage, which begins at nine or ten years old, the child will lend greater importance to whether the drawing looks like the object being drawn.

This can be a frustrating time for some children, as their aspirations outstrip their abilities and knowledge. Some children give up on drawing almost entirely. However others become skilled, and it is at this stage that formal artistic training can benefit the child most. The baseline is dropped and the child can learn to use rules such as perspective to organize space better. Story-telling also becomes more refined and children will start to use formal devices such as the comic strip.

Perspectives Drawing Development in Children Viktor Lowenfeld Betty Edwards										
	2 3 4 6 8 12 14 yrs	2 years	3 years	4 years	6 years	8 years	10 years	12 years	14 years	16 years
Viktor Lowenfeld <i>Creative and Mental Growth</i>	Scribbling stage First disordered scribbles are simply records of enjoyable kinesthetic activity, not attempts at portraying the visual world. After six months of scribbling, marks are more orderly as children become more engrossed. Soon they begin to name scribbles, an important milestone in development.	The preschematic stage First conscious creation of form occurs around age three and provides a tangible record of the child's thinking process. The first representational attempt is a person, usually with circle for head and two vertical lines for legs. Later other forms develop, clearly recognizable and often quite complex. Children continually search for new concepts so symbols constantly change.		The schematic stage The child arrives at a "schema," a definite way of portraying an object, although it will be modified when he needs to portray something important. The schema represents the child's active knowledge of the subject. At this stage, there is definite order in space relationships: everything sits on the base line.		The gang stage: The dawning realism The child finds that schematic generalization no longer suffices to express reality. This dawning of how things really look is usually expressed with more detail for individual parts, but is far from naturalism in drawing. Space is discovered and depicted with overlapping objects in drawings and a horizon line rather than a base line. Children begin to compare their work and become more critical of it. While they are more independent of adults, they are more anxious to conform to their peers.		The pseudo- naturalistic stage This stage marks the end of art as spontaneous activity as children are increasingly critical of their drawings. The focus is now on the end product as they strive to create "adult-like" naturalistic drawings. Light and shadow, folds, and motion are observed with mixed success, translated to paper. Space is depicted as three-dimensional by diminishing the size of objects that are further away.		The period of decision Art at this stage of life is something to be done or left alone. Natural development will cease unless a conscious decision is made to improve drawing skills. Students are critically aware of the immaturity of their drawing and are easily discouraged. Lowenfeld's solution is to enlarge their concept of adult art to include non-representational art and art occupations besides painting (architecture, interior design, handicrafts, etc.)
Betty Edwards <i>Creative and Mental Growth</i>	The scribbling stage Random scribbles begin at age one-and-a-half, but quite quickly	The stage of symbols After weeks of scribbling, children make the discovery of art: a drawn symbol can stand for a real	Pictures that tell stories At four or five, the child begins to tell stories or work out problems with her drawings, changing basic forms as needed to express	The Landscape By five or six, children develop a set of symbols to create a landscape that eventually becomes a single variation repeated endlessly. A blue line and sun at the top of the page and a green line at the bottom become symbolic representations of the sky and		The stage of complexity At nine or ten years, children try for more detail, hoping to achieve greater realism, a prized goal. Concern for where things are in their	The stage of realism The passion for realism is in full bloom. When drawings do not "come out right" (look real) they seek help to resolve conflict	The crisis period The beginning of adolescence marks the end of artistic development among most children, due to frustration at "getting things right." Those who do manage to weather the crisis and learn the "secret" of drawing will become absorbed in it.		

	<p>take on definite shapes. Circular movement is first because it is most natural anatomically.</p>	<p>thing in the environment. Circular form becomes a universal symbol for almost anything. Later symbols become more complex, reflecting child's observations on the world around him.</p>	<p>meaning. Often once the problem is expressed, the child feels better able to cope with it.</p>	<p>ground. Landscapes are composed carefully, giving the impression that removing any single form would throw off the balance of the whole picture.</p>	<p>drawings is replaced by concern for how things look-- particularly tanks, dinosaurs, super heroes, etc. for boys; models, horses, landscapes, etc. for girls.</p>	<p>between how the subject looks and previously stored information that prevents their seeing the object as it really looks. Struggle with perspective, foreshortening, and similar spatial issues as they learn how to see.</p>	<p>Edwards believes that proper teaching methods will help children learn to see and draw and prevent this crisis.</p>	
--	---	--	---	---	--	--	--	--

Copyright 1985 and 1987 Susan K. Donley, All Rights Reserved

Adapted from teacher inservice training materials for early childhood, art education, and special education workshops.



Education | Positions | Clients | Projects | Publications/workshops | Honors/grants



Art by Susan Donley • PETS PICTURED.com

sdonley@learningdesign.com

Gestalt Therapy Directive Approach: (Violet Oaklander)

1. Having the child share the experience of creating the sand/art- feelings about approaching the task.
2. Having the child share the sand/art itself- describing it in their own way.
3. Having the child elaborate on the parts of the sand or art; making parts clearer, more obvious; describing the shapes, forms, colors, representations, objects, people.
4. Asking the child to describe the sand/art as if the child were using the word "I". "I am this sand tray/art; I am filled with so many things; I have red lines all over me and a square in the picture."
5. Picking specific things in the sandtray or art for the child to identify with: "Be the blue square and describe yourself further- what you look like, what you do, etc". "Be the pig in the corner and describe yourself further- what do you see, what do you do, what do you feel, etc."
6. Asking the child questions, if necessary, to aid the process: "What do you do? "Who uses you?" "Who are you closest to?" These questions will come from your ability to get into the sandtray and art along with the child and open yourself up to the many possible ways to exist, function, relate.
7. Further focusing the child's attention and sharpening their awareness by emphasis on a part of the sandtray or art. Continue asking questions "Where is it going?" "Who is she with?" "and on and on. If the child says, "I don't know" don't give up- move onto another part of the sandtray/art. You can also give your own answer and ask the child if it is right or not.
8. Have the child dialogue between two parts of the sandtray or art.
9. Encourage the child to pay attention to certain figurines or to the colors in art.
10. Watch for cues in the child's voice tone, facial expressions, body posture, breathing, silence. Use these cues to promote flow in your work.
11. Help the child to "own" the projection in their sandtray or art. "Do you ever feel that way?", "Do you ever do that?", etc. Ask them carefully and gently. Don't push a child to "own"- they may not be ready.
12. Watch for the missing parts of empty spaces in the sandtray or art and attend to that.
13. Attend to where the energy is.

Directive Ideas:

- Create your world- "Close your eyes and go into your space. See your world- what is it like for you? How would you show your world in the sand or on paper? How would you show your world just using curves, lines and shapes? Where would you put yourself in the sand or picture?"
- Family Tray or Drawing- "Close your eyes and go into your space. Now think of each member of your family. If you were to choose a figurine or draw them on a piece of paper as something they remind you of, rather than real people, what would they be?"
- The Scribble- "Pretend there is a giant piece of paper standing in front of you as wide as your arms will reach and as high as your arms will reach. Imagine you are holding a crayon in each hand and scribble on this imaginary paper, making sure every corner and every part of the paper is touched." The ask the child to do it on real paper. Examine the scribble drawing and see if you can find a picture/image(s) within the scribble.
- My Week, My Day, My Life Sandtray or Art- Create your day, week or life.
- The Squiggle- Make a random mark on the page and ask the child to finish the picture. Place a figurine in the sand and ask the child to finish the tray.
- Breathing- Do some breathing exercises and then create how you feel in the sandtray or with art.
- Create a self portrait
- Create what you do when you are angry
- Create a sandtray/art of a time when you felt the most alive
- Create a sandtray/art how you get attention
- Create a sandtray/art of a physical pain
- Create a roadmap for your life
- Create an exaggeration of how you look
- Outline the child on large paper and have them color it in
- Draw yourself as an animal
- Create a sandtray/art of a challenging event, now create what you wished would have happened
- Create three wishes
- Create what it would feel like or what you would do if you had all of the power in the world
- Draw a present you would like to receive
- Create a sandtray or art of something you wish you did not do
- Create a sandtray or art of something that you are proud of
- Clay with eyes closed- close your eyes and form a shape- let the clay lead. Make an animal. Make something real. Make a story. Make something special. Make your family. Make something imaginary. Limit each activity with 3 minutes to help with perfectionism.
- Clay with eyes opened- all of the above.
- Collage
- Make a mask- paint outside with how you show yourself to the world and inside how you really feel. Make a sandtray- half shows how you show yourself to the world and other half show how you really feel
- Box- same as mask

Book Suggestions:

Windows to our children- Violet Oaklander

Play Therapy: Engaging and Powerful Techniques for the Treatment of Childhood Disorder- Clair Mellenthin

Books by Liana Lowenstein