



Module 2: Understanding the The Set Up/Offering

Module Focus: The purpose of this module is starting to understand the Set Up/Offering and the therapist's role in the healing process.

Supportive Tenets:

1. The child projects his/her/their inner world onto the toys and the therapist, setting them up to **experience his/her/their perception** of what it feels like to be him/her/them.
2. The therapist's ability to be **congruent and authentic** in language and non-verbal signals allows the child to feel safe in the relationship and engage in **reflective awareness**.

Reading: *Read Chapters 7 (The Set Up) and Chapter 8 (Authentic Expression) in Aggression in Play Therapy: A Neurobiological Approach for Integrating Intensity to further understand The Set Up*

Learning Objectives:

1. Explain how children use The Set Up/Offering in play therapy to set the toys and the therapist up to feel how they feel
2. Describe how children are looking for templates to help pattern and re-pattern their states of activation.

Handouts Needed: None

The Set Up/The Offering:

- The child sets the toys and the therapist up to feel how he/s he/they feels- SPT Tenet
- The Set Up/The Offering 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 therapist is going to feel The Set Up/Offering whether they want to or not.
- The therapist and child will share a "felt sense resonant" experience, but will have different associations to the felt sense. This is what allows a therapist to join the child's world, but stay simultaneously knowing they are separate.
- The child's mirror neuron system is looking for templates to copy, so that they can pattern and re-pattern their states of activation.
- The Set Up/Offering doesn't just occur in the playroom. It occurs for all people as we are constantly projecting our inner reality onto life around us to learn about ourselves.
- The Set Up/Offering is just one of the brilliant capacities we have to help us to see ourselves and our un-integrated painful memories. In other words, to look into a mirror and/or revisit that which still needs to be healed.

*“It turns out that as we observe others, our brains create a full simulation- even the motor components of what we are observing. It is as if for a moment we imagine being the person we are observing. Our brain actually attempts to feel what the other person is experiencing and it treats what we observe as an experience shared with others. Our mirror neurons fire when we see others expressing emotions, as if we were also making those facial and body expressions. By means of this firing, the neurons also send signals to the emotional brain centers in the limbic system to make us feel what other people feel (pg.119) Iacoboni, M. (2008). *Mirroring people: The new science of how we connect with others*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.*

“For “full” emotional communication, one person needs to allow his state of mind to be influenced by that of the other.” Siegel, D. J. (2010). *The mindful therapist: A clinician’s guide to mindsight and neural integration*. NY: Norton.

What is Deflective vs Reflective Awareness?

Notes:

Attunement between the Therapist and Child:

- Brain research shows us that the healing agent in all therapies is the level of attunement between the therapist and the child, not the metaphor or symbolism of the toys (although these are helpful tools to create attunement in the therapeutic process).
- We are not thinking our way through the dysregulation, we are feeling our way through it. We are constantly connecting and modulating the intensity.
- Exaggeration of an experience is not attunement.

Notes:**Reflective Questions:**

- What is something I learned that felt really significant?
- What is something I am curious about and want to understand more?

To Work On:

1. Feel The Set Up/Offering. Get curious about the Offering, how others set me up, and how I set others up.
2. If I am feeling courageous, try naming my experience just to see what happens.
3. What is one goal I will set for myself to work on?