

VIRTUAL SANDTRAY

www.sandtrayplay.com



Volume 1
Issue 1
September 2016

"By offering both virtual and traditional sand trays in their offices, therapists greatly increase the likelihood the sandtray therapy will meet the individual needs and preferences of their clients."

***Charles Schaefer,
Ph.D., RPT-S***

United States

Welcome to our first issue of the Virtual Sandtray App newsletter!

This newsletter is intended to keep you up to date with what is happening with the App, updates, features, trainings, booths, uses, and sharing cases. We welcome your sanitized cases for inclusion here!

Virtual Sandtray App History:



Hello! My name is Jessica Stone, Ph.D. I am a Licensed Psychologist and Registered Play Therapist – Supervisor in the United States. I have been an RPT since 1995 and really have enormous passion for this work, this field, and our clients.

In 2011 a dear friend and colleague was helping families during the trauma of the Tsunami in Japan. She was asking for donations of play materials and I began thinking how difficult that must be to have a disaster response operation and little to no materials to utilize play therapy. My local community was quite gracious and I was able to send out 4 very large boxes which included donated items from me personally and others with generous souls. FedEx even shipped them for free!

History Continued:

I was thinking of sandtray therapy, among other techniques, when I packed the boxes and thought how difficult it would be to have a tray *and* sand *and* enough figurines to allow the client to adequately (or better) create a tray in this situation. I started to think about portability – true portability – of sandtrays and the materials and I said to my husband, “what about a sandtray on a tablet?”. From there the Virtual Sandtray App was born!

My husband and I are a combination of knowledge and interests I hear about often, a mental health person with an engineer partner. He (Chris) has had an interest in computer coding since childhood. He is a self-taught programmer (still amazes me) and when I brought up this idea he took some time to think about it. I called a few companies to see about getting this project created since Chris was very busy with other projects. Wow was it phenomenally expensive – the lowest bid I received was \$35,000 JUST TO START! After I was able to start breathing again I thought the project would never see the light of day.

When I came home from work one evening Chris presented me with great news – he was going to start working on the App. Two and a half years later we have a therapy tool that is so beyond my expectations I can’t even believe it! The countless hours spent, literally thousands, have created a very thoughtful, useful therapeutic tool. We are proud to offer to you this labor of much time and passion – The Virtual Sandtray App or VSA. Our mission is not to replace the traditional tray, but to make this amazing tool more accessible to clients and therapists, wherever and whomever they may be!



Discussion Piece:

This is a recreation of a tray completed by a 7-9 yo girl in a therapy session. Please send us your therapeutic reactions and interpretations and we can follow this up in the next newsletter!

- 1) What do you see happening in this tray?
- 2) How would you proceed once the client indicated it was completed?
- 3) Would you like to see how this tray progresses if the client wanted to return to the saved tray during a future session?
- 4) How do you think it might progress? In the next session? After 4 more sessions?

Please send submissions to: support@sandtrayplay.com



Recreation of a clinical tray completed by a 7-9 yo girl.

Interesting Case:

*Sanitized

“Brilliant app. Portable sand tray with an endless supply of figures and objects. Endless creative potential and suitable for all ages.”

***Majella Ryan,
Psychotherapist***

Ireland

Mark is a profoundly gifted young adult aged between 18-21. He is seeking help for some depressive symptoms, especially regarding his schooling. He is not particularly emotionally connected to himself or the world around him. His presentation is very intellectualized and cerebral. Emotional insight into his life, relationships, and behaviors is very difficult, if not impossible, to access verbally. Having worked with gifted individuals for years, I knew I would have to be creative with my approach.

I offered Mark the use of the traditional sand tray in my office. I briefly explained the process to him. He was not interested in participating. He looked at me with a less than impressed expression... I quickly followed up with an offering of a digital version of the sandtray process. Mark is very interested in all things to do with computers and he perked up. A coder himself, and a computer science major, he seemed to feel this was much more “up his alley”.

The tray he created was PHENOMENAL. It was difficult for me to sit still in my chair and be an observer because I was so blown away by what he was showing me. He meticulously arranged buildings and animals on two of the sides. I wish I could show you the photos we took.

In the center of the tray he began to dig an intricate maze around a house which showed me that it was very complicated to get to him. His outer world was very orderly and structured, his inner world was protected and complicated to access. I’m not sure he would have verbally articulated that to me but it was clear that part of him was aware of this dynamic. I didn’t verbalize this with him directly, but I did begin a line of interaction which focused on the complexity of this access and how that affects him socially. The sessions just took off from there. It was very, very exciting and beneficial to be able to have this tool to use.

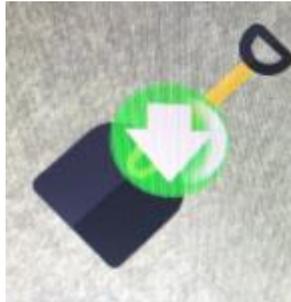
Monthly Tip for VSA Use:

VSA Digging Feature

Digging, building up the sand and burying are all key components of Sandtray therapy. Here are some quick tips on how to do each in the VSA after signing in and choosing “play”:



We will be using the pail and shovel icon on the far left of the menu on the bottom of the tray, shown above.



Digging:

One quick tap on the pail and shovel icon will cause the icon to blink. It will show a shovel with a “down” arrow super imposed over it. If you then “long press” on the blinking icon a menu of shovel sizes will show up. (Long press is defined by using the pad of your finger to press on the center of the icon until another menu pops up. We will use this a lot in this app.) There are three shovel sizes to choose from: small, medium, and large. Choose which one you want by touching the shovel icon. Once chosen, move your finger across the iPad on the sand to dig down.

The digging is done in layers so at first you will see that it went down and is still showing sand. If you lift your finger up and place it back down in the same area and move it around you will dig down to a liquid layer. This will show blue water. Future tutorials will walk you through changing the liquid to other types (lava,

Monthly Tip Continued:

poison, etc.). You can explore this on your own in the settings folder icon under “environment options”. Please note that once you have dug down – if you drag your finger from the water over through the sand it will dig to that liquid level. If you drag your finger from the sand over the water it will drag the sand over the liquid. This can be left or easily cleared by starting in the water and moving your finger in the area you want cleared.



Building up the sand:

A second tap on the pail/shovel icon will blink with an “up” arrow on it. You can long press now to change your shovel size or leave it on your previous choice. When you now drag your finger across the sand it will build it up in levels. As before, when you lift your finger and go across the same area it changes the level. In this case it will build it up further with each lift and pass. It can be spikier or more smooth depending on your movements. It’s good to play around with it!

Burying items:

It’s so important to be able to bury items! Once an area is dug you can place a 3D model in the area. Then you can choose the “up” digging option and fill in the space. You can also touch the pail/shovel icon one more time to show an eraser. This feature returns the sand to it’s original level. Therefore, you can cover an item with sand by using the “up” dig feature or the eraser, it’s up to you! The larger the item, the more it will stick up out of the sand, just like a physical item would. If you want the item completely covered you should either choose a small item or resize a larger item for the size of the hole you dug. 3D model choice, manipulation (including resizing) will be discussed in another newsletter issue!

Monthly Tip Continued:



Erasing:

If you touch the pail/shovel icon once more it will reveal an eraser. This will allow you to return an area to its original level by dragging your finger over the area you'd like to correct.

You are also welcome to view instructional videos in any of these locations:

- 1) www.sandtrayplay.com
- 2) Virtual Sandtray App Facebook page
- 3) YouTube channel for Virtual Sandtray App

Call for research proposals:

We are looking for well-designed research proposals to evaluate the many uses and implications of the VSA. Please submit your idea and we will be happy to discuss it with you. A current interest is research on use in school settings.

Call for newsletter submissions:

Do you have something exciting to share? Write it up and we will consider it for inclusion in the newsletter!

In the works

There is a seriously amazing new development in the works! It's hush hush for now but we will be announcing it as soon as possible! We hope to have it ready for the Association for Play Therapy conference in Louisville, Kentucky this October.

Come see us!

We will be hosting a booth at the Association for Play Therapy conference in Louisville, Kentucky this October! Please come by and try out the VSA for yourself on one of the many iPads we will have available and learn about our new development! We can't wait to see you there!



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