VIRTUAL SANDTRAY

NEWSLETTER
WWW.SANDTRAYPLAY.COM
Creator’s Message:

It’s Cool, But is it Necessary?

Earlier this year we posted this on our Facebook page. The video was an advertisement for a peeler by Cooking Panda. It really got me thinking. Here is the post:

Why is she posting a video of an automatic peeler on a page for the Virtual Sandtray App you ask?

I saw this this morning and it got me thinking. First I thought, that's pretty cool looking. Secondly, I thought, but is it really necessary?

So, it's cool, but is it necessary?

Then I started to think about the VSA and that some people probably feel this way about it. It's cool, but is it necessary? My answer is yes. Here is why:

1) It's imperative that we as clinicians speak our client's language, whatever that language is; music, Pokemon, tech, Playmobil, basketball, sand, etc., etc. Even if we aren't fluent, I feel we have a responsibility and a duty to learn as much as we can to a) interact competently and b) discover the therapeutic value in either/both the i) interaction ii) the tool

AND

2) It is also imperative that we work for full access for our clients. Whether that be because of ability, location, accessibility, allergies, interest, tactile concerns... the list can go on and on.

“Current technology is a fundamental part of a child’s life at this point. It’s woven into a child’s very nature. So now what? How do I co-create?”

Henry Kronengold, Ph.D.
The Virtual Sandtray App is an additional tool that allows a therapist to speak some of their client's language and provide access to a great tool for those who would not otherwise be able to utilize it.

This to me is like this peeler. Sometimes people are unable to peel their own fruit for a variety of reasons. Sometimes you want the fruit to look a certain way for an important dish or event. Sometimes having it conveniently peeled, and quickly, allows for more fruit consumption. Some people don't like the "white stuff" and the more it is gone the better.

Isn't it great that you can peel it with your hands and get in there and get sticky and feel the juice run down your forearm and conjure up sweet memories of the summer or your grandmother or your favorite dish if you'd like?

And if you don't - if that process prohibits you from eating that fruit - from receiving the benefits of it, then by all means. Have a fancy peeler.

Jessica and Chris
Guest Article

Surprises

By: Michael Ehrig

Technology in therapeutic play has surprised me. I always found that it can be very beneficial in building that relationship and strengthening it. As our society has shifted towards using technology more and more in our everyday lives, so I knew relationships with clients would quickly develop with technology being in the room. I was surprised to see how many benefits that I was not considering or missing until I saw it playing out in front of me. The therapeutic opportunities and applications have been endless which allows for both the client and therapist to be creative!

I've been blessed to have a few opportunities to present on Virtual Sandtray (VSA) to mental health peers in graduate school programs and agencies. Every presentation on VSA, I learn something new from the crowd that I am presenting to. Initially, they're always thinking okay, so it's just an app? How much does it cost? Why is it worth it? This is my favorite part of the presentation because I am able to explain what VSA means to me and how I use it therapeutically but also challenge them to think critically on how they could use it with clients that they are seeing.

Recently, I was presenting to some interns at an agency and they told me that they weren't sure what virtual sandtray was or how it could be useful. As I explained to them that how it isn't just an app and how VSA is a unique tool in therapy that allows clients to create an in-depth story with the ability to save, record, and reload a tray, I could see their eyes starting to light up. They started to make connections, just as I did when I learned about VSA for the first time, on how to use it therapeutically. Many of them started shouting out ideas on how they could use it in family sessions and individual sessions and how it isn't just an app. This was my intention for the presentation. See, I am not trying to persuade people to buy an app, I'm challenging them to critically think on how to better themselves as a therapist for their clients and how VSA offers that unique opportunity to do so. The interns started to get real excited and giddy about the possibility of using the app within their practice.

VSA has allowed my clients to express and create their story with in-depth visuals. The technological piece of VSA provides a unique visual experience that is very effective in family sessions for parents to see what they're child is feeling and experiencing. For example, seeing a dragon hovering in the air flapping it's wings endlessly while looking over an another dragon whose trapped with flowing lava around them creates a mind-blowing interpretation of this child's story.
The ability for clients to save and reload a tray to either change the story or add something to the story has been a great tool of VSA. The save and load tool provides therapists a unique opportunity to be able to manipulate the angles to understand different aspects of the clients story with in-depth visuals. It's moments like these that help me understand the importance of never being complacent with interventions and tools and keep me hunting for new experiences to creatively apply to my experience as a play therapist to create a fun environment for the clients to grow in!

Facebook Live!

If you have “liked” our Facebook page: Virtual Sandtray App, then please stay tuned for some Facebook Live trainings! If you haven’t “liked” our page, please do!

These will be quick trainings you can view between clients or anytime at your leisure. Each will cover a basic function. If you have a topic or feature you want covered, please let us know at support@sandtrayplay.com!
Guest Product

Comfort Critter® is a cuddly plush monkey with a super-hero cape and a special heart-shaped pocket that holds caring messages, secrets, feelings, and even tears.

Comfort Critter invites children and adults to openly discuss difficult topics and to allow feelings to surface and be experienced. Touching, stroking, and hugging the monkey provides a sensory rich experience that allows the client to regulate his or her emotions.
The accompanying children’s book series, *Monk Monk & Me, and Monk Monk & My Big, Brave Heart (coming Summer 2017)*, beautifully illustrates how Comfort Critter promotes healthy emotional awareness for children experiencing times of challenge, change, or a specific emotional trauma. Monk Monk (the first Comfort Critter) becomes a partner in the child’s healing, inviting the child to openly discuss difficult topics and to allow feelings to surface and be experienced. Parents, grandparents, and clinicians are finding Comfort Critter to be an invaluable friend in the lives of children they care about. Check out all of Comfort Critter’s products on our [website].
“A Comfort Critter is a wonderfully safe and concrete way for young children to express their needs, wants, and wishes.”
– Anna L. Farrin, LCSW
  Registered Play Therapist

“I realized the power this Comfort Critter could have in communicating heart felt thoughts and feelings in a more protected way. It was a very powerful experience for all of us, and my client and I will be working with the material it created for many sessions. What an amazing monkey!”
– Susan Lassiter, M.S., LMHC
  Jacksonville, Florida

‘I gave a Comfort Critter to a 7 year old boy today who lost his mom last Friday. He loved it!!! He hugged it, held it and named it Jo Jo! He really liked the Comfort Cards he can write secret notes on and put in the heart pocket.’
– Jennifer Maggiore, LCSW, OSW-C
  Patient Services Director
  Ackerman Cancer Center

“Comfort Critter has been an amazing source of comfort and healing through surgery, cuts and scrapes, and getting braces! It was so healing for me to be able to send this gift of comfort to my precious grandson.”
-- Janet

Call for submissions:

We welcome submissions! The current topics of interest are:

• Use of appropriate technology in therapeutic settings.

• Research regarding the use of technology in therapeutic settings.

• Book reviews.

• Case studies using appropriate technology in therapeutic settings.

Due by the 24th of each month. Please contact us for details! support@sandtrayplay.com
Upcoming Events:

VIRTUAL SANDTRAY APP TRAINING

*Join Us For Some Informative, Hands-on Fun!*

1) June 24, 2017: British Association for Play Therapy, BAPT. United Kingdom. [http://www.bapt.info/](http://www.bapt.info/)


5) October 22, 2017: Chesapeake Beach Professional Seminars, Chesapeake Beach, MD. [http://www.cbpseminars.org/training/](http://www.cbpseminars.org/training/)
The Virtual Sandtray App is a new and exciting way to create, save, load, and share sandtrays with your clients, patients, students, supervisors, and during trainings - wherever you may be. With the Virtual Sandtray App you can go above and beyond what is possible in a traditional tray. This app is not a game, rather it is a professional tool designed to enhance and expand the traditional method to new heights and possibilities. The possibilities are virtually endless!

www.sandtrayplay.com