



Ballarat Community Health

Expressive Play Therapy

Service Guide 2025

What is Play Therapy?

Play Therapy is a way for both children and adults to express their feelings and work through challenges using creative play. It helps people explore emotions, understand difficult experiences, and find ways to cope with stress or trauma.

In a safe and supportive environment, play therapy uses toys, games, art, and other activities to encourage self-expression and healing—without the pressure of needing to talk. It's a powerful tool for emotional growth and healing, especially when words alone feel difficult to use.

Play Therapy Services

A range of Play Therapy services are available including:

Humanistic Child Play Therapy

Learn to Play Therapy (Children)

Filial Therapy

Parent Coaching

Pathways Play Therapy (Adults)

Your Play Therapist

Alisa Tanaka-King is an APPTA registered, Master's qualified Play Therapist with over a decade of experience working in the mental health field. She takes an integrative therapeutic approach, and is trained in Humanistic, Child-Centred Play Therapy, filial therapy, and Learn to Play Therapy.



Alisa has completed unique research in designing Play Therapy programs for adults, specialising in miniatures, projective play, and narrative play therapy.

Alisa integrates her knowledge and experience of designing and facilitating creative psychosocial services and programs into her Play Therapy practice, offering a rich and supportive therapeutic service.

BCH offers a range of Play Therapy Services
at Coinda, 12 Learmonth Rd, Wendouree.
Referrals - mentalhealthintake@bchc.org
Enquiries (03) 5338 4500 or visit bchc.org.au



Humanistic Child Play Therapy

Non-Directive, Child-Centred Play Therapy

Age: 3+ years

Humanistic Play Therapy is a one-on-one therapy that gives children the freedom to express themselves in their own way and helps them develop coping strategies for everyday challenges.

It is an evidence-based, child-led therapeutic approach for working with children, and is developed around the idea that play is a universal language through which children can express their thoughts and feelings without words. This therapy is culturally and developmentally sensitive, making it an effective intervention for a variety of issues, and is an effective approach to counselling children.

Therapy sessions are held in a playroom with a wide variety of toys that are specifically chosen to support the therapeutic process. The sessions are conducted with the child and the therapist, generally without parents present, allowing the child to take ownership of the space.

Humanistic play therapy gives the child the freedom to identify the thoughts and feelings they need to address in a safe and supportive environment. Therapist observes and forms hypotheses based on the child's play, gathering insights and making assessments along the way.

Humanistic Play Therapy is ideal for children who struggle to verbalize their needs, thoughts, and feelings, as well as those with social and emotional challenges. It has been found to effectively reduce anxiety, enhance positive social behaviours, improve self-esteem, support emotional regulation, expand social and emotional skills, and build resilience.

Learn to Play Therapy

Age: 3-10 years

Learn to Play Was designed by Professor Karen Stagnitti for children who have developmental delays, language disorders, neurodivergence, or who generally struggle with playing. Learn to Play identifies pretend play as an integral developmental skill, and focuses on a child's ability to engage in spontaneous, self-initiated pretend play.

Pretend play is when a child fully immerses themselves in activities like playing tea parties, dressing up and playing a character, cooking, being a hairdresser, or playing with cars, trains, or dolls.

Research demonstrates that spontaneous pretend play is linked to better peer negotiation, enhanced cognitive skills, improved language, symbolic thinking, self-regulation, and a stronger ability to understand abstract concepts.

Play Therapy Treatment Plans

Play Therapy Treatment Plans are scheduled in such a way that after an initial intake, 10 sessions are booked at a time. This schedule of sessions is called a Treatment Cycle and is booked in advance. A Treatment Plan may consist of multiple Treatment Cycles.

Parent meetings take place in the middle and at the end of each Treatment Cycle (every five weeks) to discuss progress, themes in the child's play, concerns, and revisit goals.

Filial Therapy

Family Approach. Child Age: 3-12 years

Filial play therapy is a form of therapy where parents or caregivers are trained to use play to strengthen their relationship with their child. In this approach, parents learn how to engage in play with their child in a way that helps them communicate better, understand each other, and work through emotional challenges.

Filial play therapy helps children express their feelings, and it gives parents the tools to support their child's emotional and social development in a loving and supportive way.

After a family play assessment, the therapist works with the parents, conducting a series of training sessions and supporting them in better understanding their children's play. The therapist then supervises the parents in parent-child play sessions, supporting and giving feedback on the process. Filial Therapy is a holistic approach that can be tailored to meet each family's unique needs.

Filial Therapy Treatment Plans

Filial Therapy is a flexible program that can be delivered to fit a range of schedules. Families have the option of grouping sessions into larger blocks, or dividing them into shorter appointments.

There is also flexibility with some sessions available as online/telehealth.

At intake, a personalised treatment plan is created with the family to best suit their needs.

Parent Coaching

Playful Parents. Child Age: 3-10 years

This 7-week program designed to help parents and carers engage in pretend play with their children.

Pretend play is a key part of a child's development. Through pretend play, children practice thinking skills, problem-solving, language use, and imagining different perspectives—all of which help them understand how others think and behave. Without these skills, children may experience developmental delays.

This program helps parents build knowledge and practical strategies to support their child's play development. It is suitable for children with developmental delays, learning difficulties, neurodivergence, and other neurological conditions. It is easy to forget how to be playful as adults, and this is a fun, safe, and encouraging environment to re-engage with play.

Playful Parents is for adults only, with small group sizes (6–8 participants) to allow for personalised support.

Pathways Play Therapy

Play Therapy for Adults. Age: 18+ years

Pathways Play Therapy is a unique therapeutic program designed to support adults with ongoing or chronic physical and/or mental health conditions. It uses miniatures, narrative, symbols, and play to offer a therapeutic intervention that doesn't rely on talking.

This program helps adults express emotions, process experiences, and manage stress in a safe, non-judgmental space. Through play, clients can release repressed emotions, practice self-expression, and develop resilience, helping them cope with illness and life challenges.

By using a combination of guided and spontaneous play, and storytelling, the therapist helps clients access deeper emotions and meaning, ultimately leading to emotional healing and improved mental wellbeing.

Pathways Play Therapy supports a diverse range of adults including age, gender, cultural background, and neurodivergence.

Pathways Play Therapy Treatment Plans

Pathways Play Therapy Treatment Plans are scheduled in such a way that after an initial intake, 5 sessions are booked at a time. This schedule of sessions is called a Treatment Cycle and is booked in advance.

A Treatment Plan may consist of multiple Treatment Cycles..

Referral Process

Referrals for all Play Therapy services must be made using the Play Therapy Referral Form (Child or Adult). All completed referrals must be sent to mentalhealthintake@bchc.org.au. Your referral will then be screened for suitability, and you will be contacted to book in for an initial intake session. Your therapist will discuss your treatment plan at your intake session and it book this in then.

Eligibility

Play Therapy is suitable for most clients, offering neurodiverse, culturally and developmentally supportive, and gender-affirming care. If you are unsure which therapy may be suitable for your child, the therapist will guide you during your intake meeting. Please note, children who have shared custody require consent from all parents/guardians before commencing therapy.

Fee Structure

Service	Brief	Cost
Initial Intake Parents Session	Parents and Therapist discuss child's history and presenting concerns in-depth. 75-90mins	NDIS \$280 Full Fee: \$280
Child Play Therapy Sessions (Humanistic and Learn to Play)	Individual play therapy sessions. 50-60min session	NDIS \$193.99 Full Fee: \$193.99
Clinical Observations at school/kinder/day care	This price includes travel. 1hr	NDIS: \$190 Full Fee: \$190
Parent Review Sessions	Sessions held with parents throughout the intervention to review progress and goals. 1hr session.	NDIS: \$193.99 Full Fee: \$193.99
Parent Coaching: Parents Learn to Play	7 week group program	Full Fee: \$450 for whole course
Written Reports	For NDIS, court etc.	NDIS: \$193.99/hr Full Fee: \$193.99
Filial Therapy	Family therapy includes sessions with whole family as well as parent training sessions.	NDIS: \$193.99/hr Full Fee: \$193.99
Attendance at Court	If the therapist is required to attend court in relation to a child/family, the party responsible will be invoiced a fee of up to \$800 per day to cover lost earnings.	
Phone Consults	This may cover additional parent sessions, meeting with other health professionals etc.	15 mins: free 15-30 mins: \$80 30-60 mins: standard session rate
Initial Intake Pathways Play Therapy	Client and therapist discuss the client's history, presenting concerns, and goals for therapy. 1hr session.	NDIS: \$193.99 Full Fee: \$193.99
Pathways Play Therapy Sessions	Individual play therapy sessions for adults. 1hr session	NDIS: \$193.99 Full Fee: \$193.99

Payment & Cancellation Policy

Play Therapy Treatment Plans are scheduled in such a way that after an initial intake, a set of sessions are booked at a time (10 for child therapy, 5 for adult therapy). This schedule of sessions is called a Treatment Cycle and is booked in advance. A Treatment Plan may consist of multiple Treatment Cycles.

We understand that sickness and personal circumstances can prevent you from attending appointments from time-to-time. However, missed sessions cannot be offered to another client on an ad hoc basis, due to the fact that play therapy sessions occur weekly as part of the Treatment Plan. This means that we need to protect your weekly session time and cannot offer it as a 'one off' to someone else.

With this in mind, clients are permitted to cancel **one session per Treatment Cycle (10 sessions for children, 5 sessions for adults) at no cost**. Subsequent cancellations in the Treatment Cycle will be charged in full.

In all circumstances, the therapist will endeavour to offer families the opportunity to reschedule any missed appointments, or to offer alternative options for support, to avoid cancellation fees. Alternatives might include teleplay sessions, online parent sessions, or non-face-

to-face support, such as liaison with other professionals for case consultation, resource development or report writing.

All group sessions (including parent training programs) are paid up-front when booking in and are non-refundable.

Ill Health

If a client is showing any signs of fever, coughing, sore throat, flu, etc., they must not attend a session in person. Similarly, if a client is required to isolate due to government regulations (eg for infectious diseases), they must not attend a session in person. In such cases, your therapist will endeavour to transfer your face-to-face session to a telehealth session. If this is not possible, regular cancellation fees will apply.

Payment of Fees

Fee-paying clients must pre-pay to confirm their appointment. Pre-payment for a full treatment cycle is also available. At the end of a treatment cycle, one free make-up session is available.

NDIS clients will be billed via invoice. If there are more than 2 outstanding invoices, the client is unable to continue sessions until payment has been made.