

Therapeutic & Nature-Based Play (Sessions)

Example 1:

Session Focus: Sensory Exploration in Nature

1. Welcome and Set the Tone (5 minutes):

- Greet the child warmly and establish a positive and supportive atmosphere.
- Briefly explain the activities planned for the session.

2. Sensory Check-In (10 minutes):

- Use a visual or verbal sensory check-in to understand the child's current sensory state.
- Ask the child about their sensory preferences or aversions for the day.

3. Nature Walk and Observation (15 minutes):

- Take a guided nature walk, exploring different elements in the environment.
- Encourage the child to observe and touch leaves, flowers, and other natural textures.
- Use this time to discuss the sights, sounds, and smells of nature.

4. Sensory Awareness Stations (20 minutes):

- Set up sensory stations with various materials and activities.
- Station 1: Tactile Experience - Provide textured objects like sensory balls, fabric, or natural materials.
- Station 2: Visual Stimulation - Use coloured scarves, bubbles, or items with visual appeal.
- Station 3: Auditory Exploration - Include instruments or sound-making objects.
- Station 4: Proprioceptive Input - Incorporate activities like jumping, balancing, or using resistance bands.

5. Artistic Expression (15 minutes):

- Engage in an outdoor art activity related to nature.
- Provide materials like natural paints, clay, or markers for creative expression.
- Encourage the child to create art inspired by their sensory experiences during the session.

6. Movement and Play (10 minutes):

- Incorporate gross motor activities.
- Play a game that involves running, jumping, or using gross motor skills.
- Use the natural environment for interactive and imaginative play.

7. Quiet Reflection (5 minutes):

- Create a quiet spot with comfortable seating.

- Allow the child time for quiet reflection and self-regulation.
- Provide sensory-friendly tools like a fidget item or a weighted lap pad if needed.

8. Closing and Transition (5 minutes):

- Review the session briefly with the child, acknowledging their efforts and achievements.
- Discuss plans for the next session and any specific preferences or changes they might have.

Example 2: Session Focus: Active Outdoor Play for ADHD Regulation

Creating a session plan for a child with ADHD involves incorporating activities that cater to their need for **movement, variety, and engagement**. It's crucial to collaborate with the child, their caregivers, and any relevant professionals to tailor the session plan to the specific needs and preferences of the child with ADHD. Regular communication can provide valuable insights and contribute to the child's overall progress in managing ADHD symptoms:

- Be flexible and adapt activities based on the child's energy levels and engagement.
- Incorporate movement breaks throughout the session to accommodate the child's need for physical activity.
- Consider using visual supports or cues to help the child understand the sequence of activities.

1. Greeting and Establishing Connection (5 minutes):

- Begin the session with a warm welcome and brief conversation to establish rapport.
- Ask the child about their day and any preferences they may have for the session.

2. Warm-Up and Movement (10 minutes):

- Start with a dynamic warm-up to prepare the child for physical activities.
- Incorporate activities like jumping jacks, stretching, or jogging in place.

3. Obstacle Course (15 minutes):

- Set up an outdoor obstacle course using cones, hoops, and other props.
- Include activities that involve running, crawling, and balancing.
- Emphasize the importance of focus and coordination.

4. Sensory Play Break (10 minutes):

- Integrate a sensory break with activities like playing with kinetic sand or using stress balls.
- Provide a designated area for the child to take a break and engage in calming sensory activities if needed.

5. Team Sports/Game (15 minutes):

- Organize a team sport or game to promote social interaction and teamwork.

- Choose activities that involve coordination, turn-taking, and following rules.

6. Creative Expression (10 minutes):

- Provide an opportunity for artistic expression in an outdoor setting.
- Use sidewalk chalk, nature-inspired crafts, or painting.
- Encourage the child to express themselves creatively.

7. Mindfulness and Relaxation (5 minutes):

- Guide the child through a brief mindfulness activity.
- Use techniques like deep breathing or observing nature to promote relaxation.

8. Free Play (10 minutes):

- Allow unstructured playtime for the child to choose activities they enjoy.
- Offer a variety of outdoor toys and equipment for free play.

9. Reflection and Positive Reinforcement (5 minutes):

- Reflect on the session with the child, highlighting positive moments and efforts.
- Reinforce positive behaviors and accomplishments.

10. Closing and Transition (5 minutes):

- Discuss plans for the next session and any specific interests the child may want to explore.
- Provide a clear transition to signal the end of the session.

Example 3

Session Focus: Trauma-Informed Outdoor Play

Designing a play therapy session for children who have experienced trauma requires a trauma-informed approach that prioritizes **safety, choice, and gradual exposure to therapeutic activities**. It's crucial to be sensitive to each child's unique needs and triggers. This plan focuses on creating a therapeutic outdoor environment that emphasizes safety, choice, and gradual exposure to sensory experiences. It's essential to continually assess the child's comfort level and adjust activities as needed. Additionally, maintaining open communication with the child and their support network is crucial for a trauma-informed approach:

- Be attuned to signs of distress and adjust activities accordingly.
- Respect the child's pace and readiness for certain activities.
- Collaborate with other professionals involved in the child's care to ensure a coordinated and supportive approach.

1. Building Trust and Establishing Safety (10 minutes):

- Begin with a warm and non-intrusive greeting to build trust.

- Discuss safety measures and boundaries, ensuring the child feels secure in the outdoor environment.

2. Grounding and Mindfulness (10 minutes):

- Engage in a grounding or mindfulness activity to help the child connect with the present moment.

- Use activities like mindful breathing or sensory grounding exercises.

3. Nature Exploration with Therapist Guidance (15 minutes):

- Take a slow and guided nature walk, allowing the child to explore at their own pace.

- Discuss observations and feelings, providing support and validation.

4. Therapeutic Storytelling (15 minutes):

- Share a therapeutic story or use a narrative approach related to nature.

- Allow the child to express thoughts and emotions related to the story.

5. Sensory-Focused Play (20 minutes):

- Set up sensory activities that are gentle and soothing.

- Station 1: Calming Sensory Bin - Include soft materials like rice or sand with hidden objects.

- Station 2: Nature Art - Create art using natural materials, emphasizing the therapeutic process.

6. Choice-Based Play (15 minutes):

- Offer a variety of toys and activities, allowing the child to choose what feels comfortable.

- Emphasize the importance of autonomy and control in the therapeutic process.

7. Expressive Arts (15 minutes):

- Engage in expressive arts activities, such as drawing or painting.

- Encourage the child to express emotions through creative expression.

8. Therapist-Guided Relaxation (10 minutes):

- Lead a relaxation or guided visualization activity.

- Focus on creating a sense of safety and calmness.

9. Reflective Discussion (10 minutes):

- Facilitate a discussion about the session, exploring the child's feelings and experiences.

- Use open-ended questions to encourage expression.

10. Closing and Transition (5 minutes):

- Discuss plans for the next session and any specific preferences the child may have.

- Provide a clear transition to signal the end of the session.