Advanced Play Therapy
By: Winter Yielding

Play is a powerful tool for addressing cognitive, behavioral, and emotional challenges. Research suggests play therapy is an effective mental health approach, regardless of age, gender, or the nature of the problem, and works best when a parent, family member, or caretaker is actively involved in the treatment process. Play is a natural process that: builds trust and mastery, fosters learning and acceptable behaviors, regulates emotions, reduces anxieties, promotes creative thinking and problem solving, encourages open communication, and elevates spirit and self-esteem.

Through the practice of play therapy licensed mental health professionals or school counselors/psychologists are honored to witness the beautiful resiliency and capacity for change and growth children exhibit in the playroom. Studies of brain science are helping us determine how and why play therapy woks to encourage this change and growth. Play uses metaphor, allowing children to make what is in the play room whatever they need it to be. Research indicates that metaphor helps engage more of our brains. Play creates opportunities for sensory engagement. Learning information while involving multiple senses results in information being stored in multiple areas of the brain and allows for easier activation of circuits in memory storage areas, thus making the information more readily accessible. Play therapy involves introducing material in unexpected ways such as puppets, games and creative outlets and research shows that there is longer memory storage and increased activity through new and different experiences rather than mundane or expected experiences.

Advanced Play Therapy is a hands on class that focuses on theories and techniques when applied to counseling children, adolescents, adults, and older adults. Emphasis is placed on the developmental, attachment related, and trauma related needs of individuals in the counseling process. Play therapy skills, techniques, and activities for all ages will be highlighted. This course will cover advanced topics of play therapy, which consist of the systematic use of theoretical models to establish an interpersonal process wherein play therapists use the therapeutic powers of play to help individuals of all ages prevent or resolve psychosocial challenges and achieve optimal growth and development. The course is grounded in knowledge about attachment and trauma and will consist of basic principles of intervention as well as guidelines for assessment, treatment planning, and treatment. Expressive therapies such as art therapy, sandtray/sand play therapy, puppets, games, and other symbolic techniques which enable individuals to externalize and process overwhelming experiences in a nonthreatening way will be covered.

The methods for delivery of this course may include lecture, instructor-led discussion of assigned readings (books and journal articles) and case material, discussion and self/instructor critique of student play, role play, observations of the instructor and/or experts at play or doing play therapy, student self-assessments, journaling and skill-building. Play therapy instruction will directly or indirectly assist play therapists to actively participate in a process by which they strive to 1) become and remain aware of their own cultural backgrounds, influences, and biases, 2) acquire and continuously seek knowledge about how cultural backgrounds, influences, and biases operate in the lives of their clients, and 3) demonstrate culturally-appropriate therapeutic skills.
Get to Know the Faculty ... Dr. Ed Gray

1) Where were you born? Louisville, KY

2) When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? Owner of a fix-it shop or hardware store

3) Siblings: Will – retired physician, Jim – retired physician, and Pat (sister) who does all things sewing


5) Spouse and how long you have been married: Rhonda who loves architecture, home building, photography, and quilting.

6) Children: David - Pilot for Delta, Nathan – MD at Duke Medical Center, Daniel – MSW working at Washington University Medical School

7) Somewhere you would like to visit and why? Washington, DC – I love our history as a country and all the fascinating museums.

8) If you could have dinner with anyone, who would it be and why? Former President, Jimmy Carter. His faith and leadership in his retirement years is inspiring to me.

9) Something not many people know about you: I built a Soap Box Derby racer as a teenager.

10) Favorite color: blue

11) Favorite movie: Chariots of Fire

12) Favorite sport and/or team: Alabama football which keeps the peace in my marriage since my wife is such a big fan.

13) Favorite thing about Memphis: Bass Pro and Harding School of Theology

14) Favorite book (other than the Bible): Soul Searching by Bill Doherty

15) How long have you been teaching at Harding? 25 years

16) Biggest challenge or obstacle: Being the youngest of four siblings! :)

17) Proudest moment or accomplishment: Teaching at Harding School of Theology

18) Person who had the biggest impact on your life and why? Larry James with his love for people, his caring for the underserved in our society, and his example of what grace really means.

19) Favorite scriptures: Ephesians 2:8-10 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

20) Words of wisdom for our students: May your judgments be gentle.
Student Spotlight—Victoria Jones

My name is Victoria Jones, but my friends call me Tori. I love to dance and stay active, but I also love still days on my porch with my husband and my dog. I love to go to new cities with my family and friends and try new coffee shops. Coffee has definitely been a huge part of my free time as well as my education!

I grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma and moved to Joplin, Missouri in 2011. After completing my Bachelor's in psychology and marrying my amazing husband, I knew I wanted to continue my education and become a counselor. Now, I commute from Joplin to Harding's Northwest Arkansas campus while working on my Master's.

I grew up in a very broken home, which resulted in my grandparents doing most of my raising. My grandmother’s character was very loving, loyal, and nonjudgmental. Her genuineness and love for the Lord has always inspired me and has played a huge part in my desire to become a counselor. I am thankful for her role in my life and for God's plan that has brought me to Harding. I can always count on my peers and professors to give me honest feedback and to build me up and encourage me in my endeavors. I know with certainty that this program will equip me to be the helper I am supposed to be through my classes, professors, and supervisors.

Student Spotlight—Heather Gould

For as long as I can remember I have wanted to help people. Through this profession, I can profoundly impact other’s lives. I am a student at the Memphis site and from the day I visited campus and met the professors, I knew this was the right place and the right path for me. I desire to offer people hope and healing. Even if I only impact one person for the better, then I have done good work.

I love to bake, run, travel, and most of all to laugh. I am very close to my family and systems theory has, of course, helped me learn the extent to which my family has influenced me. The most impactful parts of this program have been the multicultural counseling class, building relationships with my professors, and completing practicum. Each of these parts have refined my clinical skills and aided in significant growth both professionally and personally.
Fall 2018 Calendar

New Student Orientation.................................................................August 16
Classes Begin................................................................................August 20
Fall Break Day (no classes) ............................................................October 12
Homecoming Alumni Breakfast & CE...........................................October 19
ArCA Conference & Poster Session..............................................November 7 - 9
Final Exams................................................................................December 10 – 13
Commencement...........................................................................December 15

Chi Sigma Iota by: Dana Bennett, 2017-2018 CSI President

Chi Sigma Iota had a great year, and we had the opportunity to participate in and serve the community in several great activities. Summer activities included sponsoring a booth at the Dr. Robert E. Elliott Foundation Depression Seminar at Unity Health in Searcy and a Day of Caring at Harding in July. We began the school year in August with an introduction to CSI, and a meet and greet with our new students in the Professional Counseling Graduate Department. In September, we sponsored a team of four graduate students in the American Counseling Association (ACA) Ethics Writing Competition and the team placed third in the nation. In October, we participated in the IPE meeting on campus, as well as a Graduate School Panel for Harding University’s undergraduate psychology majors. Following this, CSI made plans to bring Shawna Burns, LPC and creator of the “Seed Digging” concept, to Harding University for a Lunch and Learn in November. We also had members volunteer and present at the Arkansas Counseling Association (ArCA) Conference in Hot Springs in November. We began the Spring Semester with an introduction to CSI and a meet and greet for our new students, and three of our members were presented with $1,000 scholarships from the Elliott Foundation. In February, the Elliott Foundation added one of our CSI members to their board, and members presented a Depression and Wellness Presentation to the Upward Bound students. April was a busy month, as we inducted 18 new members into Chi Sigma Iota, and the group elected Lillian Chen as President and Morgan Harville as the secretary for the 2018-2019 school year. We administered depression screenings to the Upward Bound students, as well as participated in the IPE meeting, Disaster Drill, and partnered with Harding University National Alliance on Mental Illness (HUNami) for Bisons for Christ, where we did gardening and yard work for the day at the White County Group Home. We had a productive, fun year and I am excited to see what this next year holds in store for Chi Sigma Iota!