

# Play Therapy

*A place where  
children can just be.*

**Free support is available for children aged 0-11 years who have been impacted by the East Gippsland bushfires.**

## What is Play Therapy?

Play Therapy is a powerful, developmentally-appropriate and evidence-based method of counselling children.

Utilising the power of play, it uses imagination and other non-verbal methods to engage and work therapeutically with children.

Play Therapy is based on a number of theoretical models designed to relieve suffering, prevent or resolve emotional and behavioural difficulties and help children to achieve optimal growth and development (APPTA, 2014).

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## What can Play Therapy help with?

Play Therapy can help children to:

- learn skills to support taking more responsibility for certain behaviours
- develop coping strategies and creative problem-solving skills
- learn self-respect
- learn empathy and respect for others
- alleviate feelings of anxiety
- fully experience and express their feelings
- strengthen their social skills.

Play Therapy can also support stronger family relationships and help address issues related to:

- ADHD/ASD
- behavioural problems
- trauma
- fear/anxiety
- grief
- symptomatic behaviours
- aggressive behaviours
- self-concept/self-esteem.

**Phone** 1800 001 068  
**Email** [bushfiresupport@rav.org.au](mailto:bushfiresupport@rav.org.au)  
**Visit** [www.rav.org.au/BushfireSupport](http://www.rav.org.au/BushfireSupport)

This service is funded by the Gippsland Primary Health Network, which is leading the mental health response to bushfire-affected areas of Gippsland.

## The therapeutic powers of play

Play is neurological magic! It offers children creative ways to solve problems, enhances moral and psychological development and resilience, and promotes self-regulation and self-esteem.

Through the therapeutic relationship, play builds social competency, attachment, and empathy.

Play helps children to express themselves, allows access to unconscious thoughts, and creates space for direct and indirect learning.

Play gives children space to process, release and express both positive and negative emotions. This promotes stress management and helps them to overcome their fears.

## As a parent/caregiver, how can I support my child?

You are very important in supporting your child's therapeutic process.

### Do:

- encourage your child to attend their scheduled sessions
- establish a parent-therapist alliance with your child's Play Therapist.

### Don't:

- ask your child to "be good" or "behave properly" at therapy, as this will limit their need for free expression
- ask your child what they did in therapy. This can put pressure on them to share and to talk about things that they may not understand.

It's important to be aware that, during the therapeutic process, behaviours may appear to worsen before they get better. If you have any concerns, please talk to your child's Play Therapist.

## How is Play Therapy provided?

Play Therapy can be provided in any small, quiet space, such as a school kindergarten, or even online via Telehealth. Please contact us to discuss your needs and the options available.

## What qualifications do Play Therapists have?

All Play Therapists hold a master's degree, usually in counselling, psychology, or social work. Some Play Therapists may hold a master's degree in other related disciplines which also emphasise the clinical or counselling aspects of therapeutic relationships.

Play Therapists also have training and practice experience in child development and/or counselling, and are required to be registered with a peak professional body.

