

SANDTRAY SUITE

MODULE 5: WHEN TO USE DIRECTIVES

When we get adult clients who may not really get this whole sandtray thing, even though they're willing to try it. You've done the no-fail script. You've worked to try to explain as much as you can. They still may struggle with "getting it." And there's really, oftentimes, two reasons this may happen. One is that they may be very very left-brained. So, my dad, for example, is a CFO. He's an accountant by trade, and so he's very very left-brained, very black or white. They call him "No gray Gary." So, if I had him come in to do a sandtray and I said, "Hey, let's do a tray about your world." He'd probably be like, "What do I do? Where do I start? What do you do?" And it's not that he's being resistant. His brain just doesn't naturally work that way. But, if I gave him a directive to do something like, "Make a tray about your church, or your family, or about the Cardinals, even." He could hang his head on that and then he would be able to go where he needed to go. So, that's one reason I think that you guys need to use directives. If you get a client who you know is just very left-brained, they have a hard time doing a general, non-directive sandtray. So that's one way that you can get them in the tray is by using a directive

Now another time that you probably would want to use a directive is if the client is very concrete. Maybe they are emotionally underdeveloped, which again, the clients that we get have often been through trauma and have often been through horrible things which we know, when you go through trauma, you often stop developing emotionally wherever that trauma happened. So, maybe we get a forty-year-old man, but he's been using alcohol and drugs since the trauma when he was 15, so he's really a fifteen year old emotionally. So, you may need to come in and give him a directive, a place. It's just a different place to start in order to get him going in the sandtray. So, again, it's ok to use directives. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that. Just know that it's a different place

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to start. But, when you provide that neuroception of safety, and when you provide that protective cocoon for your client, the brain will go where it needs to go. So, even though you gave one directive, it may be the case that the client ends up doing something completely different. And know that that's ok. There is nothing absolutely wrong with that, but the client's brain, and you know, their body brain was saying, "This is what I needed to work on." This is the growing edge. So that's what will come out in the tray.

So, again, know that the two times that you use directives with adults may be if you get a very left-brained client, or that they are emotionally underdeveloped. And, pull out one of those directives and oftentimes you will be able to have a lot more progress than you would with just a general non-directive tray.