

# SANDTRAY SUITE

## MODULE 5: WHY YOU NEED TO BE CAUTIOUS WITH ADULTS IN THE SANDTRAY

When you're working with adults in the sandtray, I want you to be extra cautious. Why does this matter so much with adults? One of the reasons is that with kids, they have this protective umbrella of play, that they are working in the sand and they are using miniatures, and it's all metaphor. And so, if things come up and they kind of get dysregulated, they can either step out of it really quickly, or they will adjust and do something else. But they're able to regulate themselves easier, again, because it's that protective umbrella of play.

Now with adults, when they're using sandtray, we often don't have that luxury as adults. We get that this is real and when things come up that we're not ready for, they will get dysregulated really really fast. So, when we're adults, we often have these cognitive blocks, these left-brain blocks that come in and go, "No, we're not ready to deal with that. Sorry. Nope. That's not on the agenda." So, we can very clearly move that away. So, what happens is, is that when adults come into the sandtray and they start using this right-brain method, and as we know, the right-brain is where trauma lies, feelings, all the stuff that really runs therapy. When it gets stirred up and it comes to the surface and is able to be shown like through sandtray, oftentimes it kind of comes in that trap door and then all of the sudden, everything that the adults weren't ready to handle comes out. And when that happens, if we are not there holding that space and providing an environment that is safe for that client, they can get really dysregulated. And if they don't have the coping skills to handle that, it can be a really really bad news deal that comes out.

So, I tell people, when you're working with clients, adults in the sandtray, make sure they have some coping skills in place, especially if it's an outpatient environment. If it's an in-patient or residential facility where

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they're going to be monitored all the time, you may be able to get away with more. But like for me, I

work in an out-patient facility. So, if I have someone who comes in and maybe have borderline personality disorder, and maybe they're suicidal, I'm not going to jump into the sandtray real quick, because I don't feel like they have adequate coping skills to handle it as things come up. So, again, just be very wary, not necessarily wary, but aware of the power of sandtray and understand that things can come up for clients that maybe they're not even aware of and you need to be ready to handle that and make sure that they have some coping skills in place before you kind of jump off the deep end with them.