



RECOGNIZING COMMON THEMES

3 minutes

When you are working with children, you often need to kind of be aware of what to expect with different ages. So, one of the tools that I really want to give you guys is this handout that I gathered over the years doing trainings, and again, we have attached below here, to really help you understand what stages and what is important to recognize for each stage. Now, why is this important? Is that when you have a child who comes to therapy, often times their developmental level is not the same as their chronological level. So, if you have a ten year old who often plays like a five year old, you want to be able to document that and note that when you're talking to other caregivers and then also, for yourself to note as he or she is able to progress along the route towards getting along towards their chronological age. You want to be able to document that and recognize it as well.

So, a couple of things to think about and to recognize when you're working with little kids and adults on up the age spectrum is a few milestones to really get your head around. So, if you're working with littles, like three, four, fives, a few things to remember is that they will not often use miniatures, they will just work in the sand. Or if they do it may be one or two things. They will often build on the floor, or build outside the sand tray. That's ok. It's to be expected. Now as we get on up into older childhood, or first, second, third grade, what will happen is they will still build trays using stories, in what I call "Moving Worlds". And when they have "Moving Worlds" that is completely fine. That is age appropriate. So what that looks like is they're telling you a story through the sand and they're saying, "And then the truck did this! And then the fireman came in and blah, blah, blah. . ." And they're moving the sand tray along. So, when you get to about age eleven or twelve is when you start seeing the shift to more static trays is what you see with adults, and older adolescences, even younger adolescences as well, depending on IQ and developmental level, and all that kind of stuff. And what I mean by static tray is the type of tray you and I would do. It is that you say, "Tell me. . . Show me your world." Or, "Tell me about your school." And they will make a tray and put things in the tray and then tell you a story about it or to be able to narrate what's going on.

[Type here]

SANDTRAY SUITE

If you try to do that with littles, they don't know what you're talking about and so they're going to go, "What?" and then they're going to do whatever they need to do anyway. You don't have to give a whole lot of explanation with littles because they're going to naturally gravitate towards the sand and they're going to put things in the sand, and they love it anyway.

So, again, just to give you a few ideas about developmental milestones for your documentation and then to often be able to know, "OK, is this expected or is it not?" I wanted to give you guys this handout and then also a little bit more information so that you can be as knowledgeable when you're documenting and also working with your clients.