AutPlay® Therapy Theoretical Underpinnings and Research

AutPlay® Therapy is an integrative family play therapy approach for children affected by autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and/or other neurodevelopmental disorders. An integrative approach is defined as a progressive form of psychotherapy that combines different therapeutic tools and approaches to fit the needs of the individual client. The theoretical underpinnings of AutPlay® include play therapy theories and behavioral therapy. The integration of evidence-based components from various play therapy theories and behavioral therapy highlight the AutPlay® protocol.

● Underpinnings from play therapy theories and approaches include: Child Centered Play Therapy (research supported for use with children with ASD and other neurodevelopmental disorders), Filial Therapy (research supported for use with children with ASD and other neurodevelopmental disorders), Theraplay (empirically supported as a treatment for ASD), and Cognitive Behavioral Play Therapy (research supported and incorporates multiple evidence-based practices for treating ASD).
● Underpinnings from behavioral therapy: Wide research support and multiple evidence-based practices for treating ASD and other neurodevelopmental disorders.

The National Professional Development Center (NPDC) on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and the National Standards Project (NSP) reviewed literature to establish evidence-based practices for individuals with ASD between the ages of birth and 22 years. Literature reviews included literature up to and including 2007 and applied rigorous criteria when determining which studies would be included as evidence of efficacy for a given practice. In 2014, the NPDC conducted an expanded and updated review, which yielded a total of 27 evidence-based practices. AutPlay® Therapy protocol incorporates thirteen of the 27 identified evidence-based practices for treating ASD. Practices incorporated into AutPlay® Therapy protocol include: Cognitive Behavioral Intervention, Modeling, Naturalistic Intervention, Parent-Implemented Intervention, Reinforcement, Scripting, Self-Management, Social Narratives, Social Skills Training, and Visual Supports.

The full results and criteria used by the National Professional Development Center (NPDC) can be found on their website NPDC – Autism Spectrum Disorder. The full results and criteria used by the National Standards Project can be found on their website National Autism Center - www.nationalautismcenter.org. Several case studies and clinical outcome trials have been conducted using AutPlay protocol. Results have shown skill gain improvements in targeted treatment goals. Parent reports have also been positive and supported skill gains for their child, parenting skill gains, and improvements in child/parent relationship.