



## **AutPlay® Therapy and Behavioral Therapy**

**Behavioral therapy** captures many approaches and interventions. It tends to be action-based with the goal to teach clients new behaviors and to minimize or eliminate unwanted behaviors. Behavioral therapy programs that are evidence based often include parent training and social-skills training for children and many incorporate goals to strengthen the parent-child relationship. Additional focus might include eliminating unexpected behavior, teaching new behavior responses, removing triggers for unexpected behaviors, teaching play skills, improving communication, improving functional living skills, reducing anxiety, providing practice and repetition for skill gain, and providing evaluative processes to ensure progress is being made toward treatment goals. There is a plethora of research showing that behavioral therapy methods improve outcomes for children with autism.

*There are three major areas that draw on the strategies of behavioral therapy:*

- 1) Cognitive-behavioral therapy relies on behavioral techniques but adds a cognitive element, focusing on the problematic thoughts that lie behind behaviors.
- 2) Applied behavior analysis utilizes operant conditioning to shape and modify unexpected behaviors.
- 3) Social learning theory centers on how people learn through observation. Observing others being rewarded/punished for their actions leads to learning and behavior change.

**AutPlay Therapy** is an integrative approach that incorporates several of the above-mentioned behavioral therapy methods with more humanistic play therapy approaches. AutPlay integrates classical conditioning approaches such as systematic desensitization and operant conditioning approaches such as token economies, contingency management, modeling, and more. Behavioral methods are incorporated into play therapy interventions designed for skill gain.

### **Behavioral Therapy Components in AutPlay Therapy:**

- Skill acquisition component with emphasis on teaching and gaining new skills.
- Behavior can be changed through skill development, environment modification, and play therapy interventions designed to present new learning and behavior options.
- New behavior can be learned, and unexpected behaviors can be eliminated through function of behavior analysis and decreasing dysregulation issues.
- Highly focused approach with specific goals to be reached and treatment goals are regularly monitored and evaluated to ensure progress.
- Emphasis on professional collaboration and active participation of children and families – parents are taught to implement interventions in the home setting.
- A psychoeducational model focused on the child and parents.
- Homework is emphasized with a focus on repetition of skill practice through home implemented play therapy interventions.