**RELATIONSHIP-BASED INTERVENTION INCLUDING PLAY THERAPY TECHNIQUES FOR AUTISM**

Program Goals and Schedule

**Program Goals**

Children on the autism spectrum struggle with communication and connection to the outside world.  This workshop will discuss ways to help parents and caretakers establish and enhance a warm, structured, playful, and connected relationship with their children.  Drawing on relationship-focused, developmental, and play therapy approaches, this two-day workshop will present an integrated approach designed to support and enhance parent-child dyadic interactions.

Based on a synthesis of research identifying the core deficits of autism underlying outward behaviors, this workshop will explore how these challenges disrupt the guided participation relationship between parent and child, reducing opportunities for playful engagement and learning. Play therapy techniques and other relationship-based strategies for moving families beyond crisis toward an improved quality of life will be emphasized. A variety of real-world strategies and play therapy approaches will be discussed, demonstrated, and practiced to enhance communication and connection between parents and children.

**Course Objectives**

After attending this program play therapy participants will be able to:

* Distinguish between static and dynamic intelligence and discuss the need to facilitate flexible thinking rather than rote skills alone
* Define several core deficits distinguishing individuals with autism from those with other social or behavioral challenges
* Describe how these core deficits disrupt the guided participation relationship between parent and child resulting in the loss of emotional connection, social engagement, and opportunities for learning
* Describe the impact that autism spectrum disorders have on generic play patterns and themes as well as playful engagement with others
* Review play therapy and other relationship-based strategies for assessing the quality of parent-child interactions
* Discuss play therapy and other relationship-based strategies for moving parents out of crisis toward a more meaningful, engaged, and reciprocal relationship with their child
* Describe, demonstrate, and practice play therapy based techniques and real-world approaches for increasing experience-sharing communication, co-regulation, social reciprocity, mindful engagement, and flexible thinking
* List two play therapy activities that can be used with parent-child dyads
* List two play therapy resources that might enhance further understanding of how play therapy can promote enhanced parent-child relationships and overall functioning

**Program Schedule**

The schedule will consist of didactic presentations, experiential work, presentation of clinical examples, and practice practical application of strategies.

**Day One**

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| 9:00 – 9:15 am | Introduction and overview of training goals  Discussion and assessment of participants’ needs for the training |
| 9:15 – 10:30 am | Defining autism  Dynamic and static intelligence  Core deficits of ASD (Dynamic analysis, episodic memory, co-regulation, flexible thinking, experience sharing communication)  DSM-5 changes in diagnosis of ASD |
| 10:30 – 10:45 am | BREAK |
| 10:45 – 12:00 pm | Disruption of the guided participation relationship in ASD |
| 12:00 – 1:00 pm | LUNCH |
| 1:00 – 1:45 pm | Changing the communication environment – real-world, play therapy, and relationship-based strategies |
| 1:45 – 2:30 pm | Changing the communication environment – video examples and guided practice |
| 2:30 – 2:45 pm | BREAK |
| 2:45 – 3:15 pm | Moving families out of crisis – beginning steps for guiding parents |
| 3:15 – 4:30 pm | Helping families prioritize intervention needs using a relationship-based approach |

**Day Two**

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| 9:00 – 9:15 am | Continued discussion and evaluation of participants’ training needs |
| 9:15 – 10:00 am | A brief overview and discussion of popular intervention programs for ASD  Discussion of play in ASD and current play therapy approaches |
| 10:00 – 10:30 am | Review of core deficits and additional video examples |
| 10:30 – 10:45am  10:45 – 11:30 am | BREAK  Video analysis of parent-child assessment sessions utilizing play therapy and play-based techniques |
| 11:30 – 12:00 pm | Strategies for strengthening the guided participation relationship based on assessment analysis |
| 12:00 – 1:00 pm | LUNCH |
| 1:00 – 2:30 pm | Planning and facilitating interactions using play therapy and real-world techniques – beginning steps |
| 2:30 – 2:45 pm | BREAK |
| 2:45 – 3:45 pm | Planning and facilitating interactions using play therapy and real-world techniques – practice and feedback |
| 3:45 – 4:30 pm | Sharing of play therapy and other relationship-based resources, ASD resources, questions, evaluations, and closing |

**General Course Information**

This course is limited to 15 participants and is designed to facilitate experiential work and group processing of clinical material. Participants will be invited to discuss their specific needs and clinical questions at the outset of the course. Clinical case discussions will respect client confidentiality.

Power point presentations and other templates/handouts will be provided to each participant with resource information and supplemental reading material.

Clinical case discussions will adhere to HIPPA regulations regarding client confidentiality.

This event is co-sponsored by Starbright Training Institute. Starbright Training Institute is approved by the Association for Play Therapy to offer continuing education specific to play therapy (APT Provider No. 96-029).

Additional Continuing Education credits for clock hours, not specific to play therapy, will be provided through the Commonwealth Educational Seminars ([www.commonwealtheducation.com](http://www.commonwealtheducation.com)). There is an additional $25 fee for those professionals interested in continuing education clock hours for social work, counseling, MFT, and psychology. Checks are made out to Starbright Training Institute (or cash paid at training, no credit cards).

Starbright Training Institute conducts one- to four-day Intensives at its facility at 8626 Lee Highway, Ste. 200-A, Fairfax, VA 22031 (Located adjacent to Gil Institute)

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*2018 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION*

Jodi is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) at Gil Institute for Trauma Recovery and Education. She also practices as a Licensed Clinical Marriage and Family Therapist (LCMFT) in Maryland and has a private practice working with children and families in Ellicott City. Jodi holds graduate degrees in the areas of school psychology and marriage and family therapy, as well as a graduate certificate in autism spectrum disorders from Johns Hopkins University. She earned a doctoral degree in Marriage and Family Therapy Creative Systemic Studies from the University of Louisiana at Monroe.

With over 25 years of experience, Jodi brings compassion, humor, and creativity to her work with children and families.  She has worked as a School Psychologist for the Howard County Public School System, provided parent consultation for families living with autism spectrum disorder through her private practice, and facilitated workshops for families throughout the United States, Canada, and in South Africa.  Jodi has training in Relationship Development Intervention (RDI®) and spent eight years working with families impacted by ASD using this model exclusively. In addition, she has received training in Theraplay®, Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP), play therapy, trauma-focused play-based interventions, and the Extended Play Based Developmental Assessment (EPBDA). She is also a Registered Circle of Security Parent Educator.