

# Filial Therapy Parent Training

## Basic Parent Skills of Filial Family Therapy for Home Sessions

### 1. Structuring Skill:

Goal - help child understand framework of home play sessions and prevent potential problems; This also defines “special play time” from “regular play time”.

- a. They are the director
- b. Free to do what they please, but parents have authority to set limits related for safety
- c. Giving them a transition warning when play time is nearing the end.

Technique:

- a. Start: “We are starting special play time. I’ve set aside these toys here. You can do almost anything you want to do during this time. If there’s something you may not do, I’ll let you know.”
- b. Breaks: Phones, emails, etc must not be attended to during this time. Bathroom breaks can be reduced by having them use restroom before session starts. If they use the restroom in the middle of play time, note when they return, “you are now back in special play time.”
- c. End: Give 5 minute warning - “We have 5 more minutes left of special play time”. Then remind them at 1 minute. When time is up, note, “our special time is up for today. It is time to put these items away.”

### 2. Empathic Listening:

Goal - a specific listening and response style that allows children’s feelings and needs to be heard. It creates sensitivity and understanding between parent and child.

- a. Listen intently to children’s words, and watch how they are playing
- b. Reflect words spoken as a statement. Do not ask questions.
- c. When no words are spoken, but there is play action, state what play activities you are seeing.
- d. Identify their feelings and reflect them back to them

### 3. Child-Centered Imaginary Play

Goal - Child is the director of the play and makes all the decision of what toys and modality of play they want to use during special play time.

- a. Allow child to choose initial play items and to assign play items to you, as well as to define their relation (such as play people and animals).
- b. Do not direct the play, make suggestions on what should happen next, or ask questions (except for basic clarification)

### 4. Limit-Setting Skill

Goal - Although you want child to direct the play, you also want the child, the parent and the house to be safe. Limit setting should be kept to a minimum. Children should be responsible for what happens to them.

- a. State the limit. If a child breaks a preset limit, restate the limit. If the limit has not been set yet, indicate the new limit.
- b. Give a warning. Indicate that a preset limit has been broken and if it occurs again, special play time will end.
- c. Enforce a consequence if necessary. If a child breaks the limit after (only one) warning, then the play time ends for the day. There should be no anger from the parent and no giving into pleas to continue. The child is escorted to the next task of the day without further discussion, threats, angry remark, regretful statements. The parent can indicate when the next special play time will be.

# Filial Therapy Parent Training

Special Time Toy Recommendations for Home Special Time Play

**Family and Nurturance Toys:** figurines, puppets, or dolls

figurine doll family (one for each member of family, at minimum)

house for doll family - can be a box, or even just a paper map of your house

puppet family (people or animals)

baby doll

nurturing doll accessories: bottle, clothes, bottle

kitchen dishes with play food

**Aggression- related toys**

Nerf gun with bullets

Foam hammer, foam bat

Military figurines (“army men”)

Aggressive animal figures, such as dragon, lion, wolf

**Expressive Toys**

art supplies: crayons, markers, chalk, white board, paper

Play-doh

Dress up: scarves, bandannas, magic wands, masks, hats, phones, mirror

**Multi-use Toys**

Medical kit: band aids, stethoscope, ace bandage wrap, etc

Deck of Cards

Play money

Bean bags

It is recommended that these items are created and put in a bag or box for use during special time. If it is not feasible to keep these items aside between sessions, then the parents can create a checklist to pull these items from the toy area before each home special time play.