

# Activity Analysis, Creativity, and Playfulness in Pediatric Occupational Therapy

## *Making Play Just Right*

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**JONES AND BARTLETT PUBLISHERS**

*Sudbury, Massachusetts*

BOSTON    TORONTO    LONDON    SINGAPORE

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Jones and Bartlett Publishers  
40 Tall Pine Drive  
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978-443-5000  
info@jbpub.com  
www.jbpub.com

Jones and Bartlett Publishers Canada  
6339 Ormindale Way  
Mississauga, Ontario L5V 1J2  
Canada

Jones and Bartlett Publishers International  
Barb House, Barb Mews  
London W6 7PA  
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### Production Credits

Publisher: David Cella  
Acquisitions Editor: Kristine Jones  
Associate Editor: Maro Gartside  
Production Assistant: Laura Almozara  
Manufacturing and Inventory Control Supervisor: Amy Bacus

Composition: Spoke & Wheel/Jason Miranda  
Assistant Photo Researcher: Meghan Hayes  
Cover Design: Scott Moden  
Printing and Binding: Courier Stoughton  
Cover Printing: Courier Stoughton

### Cover Images

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### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Miller Kuhaneck, Heather.

Activity analysis, creativity, and playfulness in pediatric occupational therapy : making play just right / Heather Miller Kuhaneck, Susan L. Spitzer, Elissa Miller.

p. ; cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7637-5606-2 (alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-7637-5606-7 (alk. paper)

1. Occupational therapy for children. 2. Play therapy. I. Spitzer, Susan L. II. Miller, Elissa. III. Title.  
[DNLM: 1. Occupational Therapy—methods. 2. Play Therapy—methods. 3. Child. 4. Developmental Disabilities—rehabilitation. 5. Disabled Children—rehabilitation. WS 350.2 M6487a 2010]

RJ53.O25M55 2010

618.92'89165—dc22

2009012406

6048

Printed in the United States of America

13 12 11 10 09 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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# *Preface*

A core tenet of this book is that the meaning of the activities we engage in with our clients is the key to intervention effectiveness. For a pediatric client, the primary meaningful occupation is play. Therefore, for pediatric occupational therapy to be maximally effective, we believe that it is our professional responsibility to incorporate play into our interventions with children.

In our experience, we noted the difficulty students and novice therapists have in applying activity analysis to pediatric interventions to create a fluid, playful atmosphere. Most writings about activity analysis focus on adult interventions and adult examples. It is our hope that by guiding the application of activity analysis to playful pediatric intervention, we may assist occupational therapists in more clearly practicing client-centered, occupation-focused pediatric therapy.

This book, like many projects that span a long period of time, evolved and changed as it emerged into the form you read today. The initial focus of the book, using activity analysis in pediatric intervention, morphed and changed as our commitment to a playful approach to therapy took center stage. What you see now is the result of a true collaboration among three very playful adults and teachers who want to encourage others to join in our fun.

The book provides the background, history, evidence, and general knowledge needed to use the approach we recommend as well as the specific examples and recommendations needed to help therapists adopt these strategies. Additionally, we provide a number of case examples and companion videos to allow the reader to engage in learning activities to improve understanding of the content. We believe the videos to be especially important as we all collectively value the experiences we have had being mentored while we observed a master clinician treating. Although it is impossible to ensure every therapist gets that opportunity, by demonstrating key principles within videotaped intervention sessions, it is our hope that the skills and strategies will come alive and be more readily understood and adopted.

Although the information we present is substantiated by research where research exists, it is also supported by our combined 40 years of pediatric practice using a play-based approach. Each of us has been guided by the work of A. Jean Ayres, and we are all lucky to have been mentored by those who are experts in practice. We all strongly believe in the need for mentoring in practice and hope that this book will be just one facet of your learning, learning that will be applied in practice with a mentor.

In keeping with the content of the text, we have tried to maintain a playful and somewhat informal writing style. We hope that the style, content, and format allow you to enjoy your learning experience as you progress through this text. As you read and practice the strategies suggested in this book, we hope you have fun and truly experience the power of play.



# *Acknowledgments*

Completing any body of work requires the collaborative efforts of many individuals, and this text is no exception. We would like to specifically thank the following people for their contributions and assistance: Maro Gartside for her patience and assistance with our endless questions and queries; Chris Marrs for his time and expertise in video editing; the numerous friends, family, and clients who agreed to be photographed and videotaped; our clients throughout the years, as each one has taught and inspired us, and that cumulative experience is reflected and embedded in these pages; and our colleagues who have encouraged and helped us by reviewing drafts of this text. Finally, we of course each need to acknowledge the sacrifice of our families, who allowed us the time to devote to this creative enterprise and labor of love.

There is nothing that screams “PLAY” to me more than watching my two dogs, Kramer and Abigail, totally in the moment romping through the woods on our hikes, and their playful nature energizes mine. So, I must recognize their sacrifice, as over the past year they often had to cheerfully wait for me to finish my work before we could go out to play. Well, maybe they weren’t so cheerful about it but they learned to wait if not to understand. More importantly, to my husband, Shayne, my enduring love and gratitude. Your playful, silly side helps keep me sane when I become too serious, and your steady support and encouragement allows me to grow.

—HMK

To my friends and family, I am so grateful for your understanding, patience, and humor. Together we have forgone so much as I put lots of play on hold to work on this book. Most of all, to my husband, David Morales, my love, gratitude, and admiration for you are only deepened by your enduring sacrifices and support. You have given up the most on a daily basis and yet have remained my greatest supporter, always believing in me even when I doubt myself. The moments of playfulness and silliness on which you insist are a welcome respite from work and the reminder I needed of the play that awaits me now. Thank you.

—SLS

My deepest love and thanks to my husband, Todd, the most fun and playful grown man I know. I will never forget your patience and willingness to support and encourage me during this process. To my two little play “monsters,” Ethan and Perry, I love you and cherish every moment we spend together. You are my true inspiration for this work.

—EM



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