

# **The Spectrum of Play**

**March 7 & March 14, 2021**

**Symbolic Play in the Treatment of Trauma,  
Mental Health and Developmental  
Differences: An Integrated Forum**

**Plenaries & Roundtable Discussion**

**Alicia Lieberman, PhD**

**Linda Gunsberg, PhD**

**Serena Wieder, PhD**

**Gilbert Foley, EdD**

**Mona Delahooke, PhD**

**Connie Lillas, PhD, MTF, RN**

**Breakout Groups with Profectum's  
Expert DIR® Faculty**

**Virtual Conference**  
**Profectum™**





## Symbolic Play in the Treatment of Trauma, Mental Health and Developmental Differences: An Integrated Forum

March 7 & March 14, 2021

**Symbolic play is the process of inventing imaginary situations or re-enactments in the safety of the relationship,** in which a story unfolds revealing the child's inner world and developmental readiness to engage in their emotional life. In therapy, symbolic play tells a collective story emerging from the reciprocal relationships between the minds and

hearts of children, parents and therapists. This creates shared emotions and mental states that give meaning, and open the children's potential for resolution, growth and advancing development.

**The first day of the Conference plenary sessions will examine the role of symbolic play in treating early trauma, emotional difficulties** such as anxiety, attachment, depression, sadness, anger and behavioral disruptions, divorce and parent alienation, as well as the role of symbolic play in the treatment of ASD and other developmental challenges. The emotional challenges and anxieties that are an expected part of development will also be emphasized. A round table discussion will address the similarities and differences among play methodologies for trauma, emotionally based difficulties and developmental differences.

**The second day of the Conference will address how related disciplines** such as mental health, creative arts, education, family therapists, occupational, speech and language as well as mental health therapists **employ symbolic play and process in their interventions.** **Small group, case-based, breakout sessions** will reflect on understanding the impact of neuro-biological individual differences across trauma, emotional difficulties, and developmental differences. It will enrich each discipline's recognition of the underlying complexity of symbolic capacity and how different disciplines working independently or together can deepen the therapeutic process and outcomes.

As a result of this conference, participants will be able to:

- ✓ Describe the benefits of using symbolic play in the treatment of trauma, emotionally based difficulties and developmental differences.
- ✓ Explain the reasons for different approaches to working with parents in these groups.
- ✓ Compare the differences and similarities in how anxiety is manifest in these groups.
- ✓ Describe the underlying complexity of symbolic capacity related to neurobiology, psychodynamics, and developmental readiness.

**March 7, 2021 | 11:00 am - 5:30 pm EST**

**10:45 - 11:00 am**

**ZOOM Webinar Opens for Attendees**

**11:00 - 11:15 am**

**Welcome**

***Serena Wieder, PhD***

Clinical Director of Profectum Foundation and Co-creator of the DIR® Model

**11:15 – 12:30 pm**

**Promoting Child-Parent Symbolic Play to Repair Early Trauma**



***Alicia Lieberman, PhD***

Professor and Vice Chair for Faculty Development, UCSF Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

This talk will describe the use of dyadic play in Child-Parent Psychotherapy for the expression of the child's trauma narrative and the co-creation by the child and the parent of a protective narrative that promotes child safety and corrects pathogenic beliefs involving the traumatic events. Clinical vignettes will illustrate the integration of child-free symbolic play with therapeutic interventions that enable the parent to become a partner with the child in repairing ruptures in trust, fostering age-appropriate object constancy, and restoring a healthy developmental trajectory.

**As a result of this presentation, participants will be able to:**

- Describe the concept of trauma narrative as expressed in children's symbolic play and play disruption.
- Explain the concept of protective narrative as a parental response to the child's trauma narrative that aims to repair the breaches of trust and pathogenic beliefs surrounding the traumatic experience.
- Describe how to partner with parents to use symbolic play in the treatment of children with trauma to restore a positive developmental trajectory.

**12:30 - 12:45 pm**

**Break**

12:45 - 2:00 pm

## The Power and Limitations of Symbolic Play in the Individual Psychotherapy of Children



### *Linda Gunsberg, PhD*

Dr. Gunsberg is in private practice in New York City and sees children of all ages, families, and adults; She is a consulting editor for the journal, Psychoanalytic Inquiry

There are different models available for psychotherapeutic intervention that employ symbolic play. This presentation will focus on the use of symbolic play in a psychodynamic context for the treatment of emotionally based difficulties such as anxiety, fear, sadness, loss, problems with anger, conflicts and attachment disruptions. These are particularly significant in the contexts of adoption, parental separation, divorce, and parental alienation. In play therapy the therapist considers when and whether or not to comment on the play itself, its underlying symbolic meaning, and its application to the child's emotional life. The therapist's reflection on their own feelings aroused in the play provides insights to understanding the child's play and what is happening in play. There are various ways in which the child therapist involves the parents, sometimes in the sessions with the child and sometimes collaterally.

#### **As a result of this presentation, participants will be able to:**

- Identify ways in which symbolic play is used in the individual psychotherapeutic treatment of children.
- Identify ways in which to assess developmental progress within the context of symbolic play.
- Describe alternative ways to educate parents regarding the significance of symbolic play for their children, and to learn how to play with their children.

2:00 - 2:30 pm

Break

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## Who should attend?

We welcome **parents and professionals** including:

Psychologists | Social Workers | Physicians | Marriage and Family Therapists  
Occupational Therapists | Occupational Therapy Assistants | Physical Therapists  
Speech-language Pathologists | Developmental Optometrists | School Psychologists  
Inclusion Specialists | Educators | Special Educators | Paraprofessionals  
Early Interventionists | Creative Arts Therapists | Behavioral Specialists ... and more!

**2:30 - 3:45 pm**

## **Symbolic Play: A Forward Journey/Pathways in Development**



***Gilbert Foley, EdD***

Consulting Clinical Psychologist, New York Center for Child Development & Clinical Co-Director, Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC); Profectum Sr. Faculty



***Serena Wieder, PhD***

Clinical Director of Profectum Foundation and Co-creator of the DIR® Model

Children with ASD and other developmental differences have inner emotional lives that can, in many cases, be accessed through symbolic play to advance emotional development and climb the developmental ladder. Working within the Developmental, Individual Difference, Relationship-based Model (DIR®) and examining the impact of auditory, visual spatial, movement and sensory processing challenges on play, this presentation discusses the use of symbolic play to promote regulation, anxiety management, reality testing, and the attainment of the hierarchy of symbolized affects in a parent-mediated model integrated with other therapies. Further, it explores unique challenges often encountered with children on the spectrum including being “stuck” at pre-symbolic play levels, using regressive symbols, borrowing symbolic themes, and progressing at their own pace. However, in spite of developmental roadblocks, many children on the spectrum can reach unexpected heights of emotional and cognitive development.

### **As a result of this presentation, participants will be able to:**

- Describe the functional emotional developmental capacities in relation to the hierarchy of symbolizing affects needed to advance symbolic thinking.
- Explain the impact of individual differences (e.g. sensory processing, motor planning, visual spatial etc.) on symbolic play function.
- Apply DIR® principles of intervention to reach higher levels of cognitive and emotional development.

**3:45 - 4:00 pm**

**Break**

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Whether you are the parent of or a professional working with children, adolescents and young adults with Autism and other Social and Mental Health Challenges,

**THIS CONFERENCE IS FOR YOU!**

4:00 – 5:30 pm

## Round Table Discussion: Similarities and Differences in Using Symbolic Play in Treatment



*Alicia Lieberman, PhD, Linda Gunsberg, PhD, Gilbert Foley, EdD, Serena Wieder, PhD, Mona Delahooke, PhD, Connie Lillas, PhD, MFT, RN*

**Dr. Mona Delahooke** is a clinical and consulting psychologist specializing in working with young children and families, Profectum Sr. Faculty

**Dr. Connie Lillas** is a licensed marriage and family therapist, RN, neurodevelopment researcher and psychoanalyst, Profectum Sr. Faculty

A round table discussion will address the similarities and differences among play methodologies for trauma, emotionally based difficulties and developmental differences.

This discussion will include the following points:

- Since we know that play in the presence of the parent is particularly beneficial to the child in their early development, how do we engage the mother and father in playing together?
- How do you take into account underlying neurological and developmental differences in your work?
- How do you determine that the child is moving forward developmentally and emotionally through symbolic play in treatment?
- How do we advance a child's play to the symbolic level when the child is "stuck" at the presymbolic level?
- Are anxiety, depression, oppositional behavior, obsessiveness, etc. similar across these categories, or different, and should they be treated differently?
- Does the psychotherapist's interpretation of the symbolic play facilitate or interfere with the therapeutic work?
- What feelings are aroused in the therapist during play and how can awareness of these feelings help the therapist understand what is happening in the child's symbolic play?

**As a result of the presentation, participants will be able to:**

- Describe the similarities and differences in symbolic play in treatment.
- Explain how the child's symbolic themes reflect developmental levels and emotional range.
- Describe when a child is "stuck" in pre-symbolic play and how to advance to higher symbolic levels in play.

**March 14, 2021 | 12:00 pm - 3:00 pm EST**

**11:45 - 12:00 pm**

**ZOOM Meeting Opens for Attendees**

**12:00 - 12:15 pm**

**Welcome**

*Gilbert Foley, EdD*

Consulting Clinical Psychologist, New York Center for Child Development & Clinical Co-Director, Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC); Profectum Sr. Faculty

**12:15 - 1:00 pm | 1:00 - 1:15 pm Break | 1:15 - 2:50 pm**

**The Spectrum of Play**

**An Interdisciplinary Perspective on the Therapeutic Power of Symbolic Play**

*Moderated by: Gilbert Foley, EdD; Serena Wieder, PhD; Mona Delahooke, PhD; Connie Lillas, RN, MFT, PhD*

Symbolic Play offers a safe pathway to re-enact, regulate and master emotional ideas and experiences. The child's impetus to create a fantasy has many sources from wish fulfillment, to claiming power, defending against anxiety, or repairing intolerable frustrations and trauma. With its many facets and meanings, symbolic play is a powerful therapeutic modality for parents, teachers and therapists of all disciplines. This session will begin with a shared case study to set the stage for small group, case-based, breakout sessions to examine the development, meaning and complexity of symbolic play, the impact of neuro-biological differences across trauma, emotional difficulties and autism, and the methods and effectiveness of intervention. Participants may discuss questions related to their use of symbolic play and learn from the perspectives of other disciplines to deepen their understanding of the therapeutic process and outcomes. Profectum's distinguished Faculty of psychologists, social workers, physicians, educators, and speech and language, occupational and creative arts therapists will facilitate themed groups, including groups for parents. Each themed group will have three facilitators and participants will be surveyed as to their group preference following registration.

**As a result of this presentation, participants will be able to:**

- Describe the underlying complexity of symbolic capacity related to neurobiology, psychodynamics, and developmental readiness.
- Describe how different disciplines contribute to deeper understanding, enriched intervention and better outcomes.
- Explain how the therapists' feelings help understand what is happening in the child's symbolic play.

**2:50 - 3:00 pm**

**Closing Remarks**

*Serena Wieder, PhD*

| REGISTRATION  |                                 |                                 |                                     |                                      |                                    |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
|   | Early Bird<br><i>Thru Feb 8</i> | Member<br><i>Feb 9 – Mar 14</i> | Non-Member<br><i>Feb 9 – Mar 14</i> | Group of 5+<br><i>Feb 9 – Mar 14</i> | Parents<br><i>With scholarship</i> |
| <b>Day 1 &amp; Day 2</b><br><i>Limited Spots Available on Day 2</i> | \$260                           | \$280                           | \$320                               | \$280                                | \$75                               |
| <b>Day 1 Only</b>   | \$185                           | \$195                           | \$225                               | \$195                                | \$50                               |

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Parents applying for a scholarship must join a “parent” breakout on Day 2 even if they are both a parent and a professional. If they are both a parent and a professional and would like to join a professional breakout, they will need to register as a professional.

**Profectum Foundation reserves the right to make changes to the program and/or schedule at any time.**

### Important Note for Registrants

Only the purchaser of the Virtual Registration may watch the LIVE ZOOM Session. Due to copyrights and the sensitive and private nature of the materials being presented, recording of the session and still photography is PROHIBITED. By purchasing a Registration, you understand and accept the terms of the registration noted above. Registrants will attend the conference live (real time) via Zoom from their location using their computer, tablet or phone. Detailed instructions on how to attend the conference virtually will be sent closer to the date of the conference.

### Registration and Cancellation Policy

Registrations and payments must be received no later than Friday, February 26, 2021. Confirmations and receipts are furnished by email. Any registration received after Friday, February 26, 2021 will be considered, providing space is available. We DO NOT invoice for our events. All attendees or groups must have a paid registration prior to the event. Written cancellation or change notifications must be received no later than Friday, February 26, 2021 via email to emily.mohr@profectum.org. A cancellation/change processing fee of \$25 will be charged. After February 26, 2021, no refunds or credit for future events will be given. Substitute attendees are welcome, but we must be notified with their name and contact information. Please understand that if you do not attend you are still liable for full payment. In the unlikely event that this program is cancelled, you will be notified immediately via email and a credit will be issued toward a rescheduled conference, or the entire submitted registration fee will be refunded without further liability on the part of the organizer

### Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities & Special Needs Requests

If you require ADA accommodations or have a special needs request, please email emily.mohr@profectum.org at least 1-week prior to the conference date so that arrangements can be made.

### Certificate of Attendance & Continuing Education

A certificate of attendance for the event will be obtained using the website, CE-Go. Before the event, you will receive an email containing a link to CE-Go. This link will be sent to the email account you used to register for the event. Upon accessing the CE-Go website, you will be able to, join webinar sessions, complete evaluation forms and download your certificate in a PDF format after those requirements have been met and full attendance of the session verified.

Registration opens at 10:45 am on Day 1 and 11:45 and on Day 2.



# Continuing Education

## **Psychologists, NY Social Workers & NY Creative Art Therapists**

Each professional is responsible for the individual requirements as stipulated by his/her licensing agency. Please contact your individual licensing board/regulatory agency to review continuing education requirements for licensure renewal.

A continuing education certificate for the event will be obtained using the CE-Go conference website. Before the event, you will receive an email containing a link to CE-Go. This link will be sent to the email account you used to register for the event.

Upon accessing the CE-Go website, you will be able to:

- Join Webinar Sessions
- Complete evaluation forms for the event
- Download your continuing education certificate in a PDF format

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the CE-Go process, please contact CE-Go at 888-498-5578 or by email at [support@ce-go.com](mailto:support@ce-go.com).

## **American Psychological Association**

CE Learning Systems, LLC is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. CE Learning Systems maintains responsibility for this program and its content.

## **New York State Education Department's State Board for Social Work**

CE Learning Systems SW CPE is recognized by the New York State Education Department's State Board for Social Work as an approved provider of continuing education for licensed social workers #0060.

## **New York Education Department Board of Creative Arts Therapy**

CE Learning Systems (d/b/a CE-credit.com), is recognized by the New York State Education Department's State Board for Mental Health Practitioners as an approved provider of continuing education for licensed creative arts therapists. #CAT-0008

## **Occupational Therapists/Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants**

This Conference will be submitted to American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) for CE review. As more information becomes available, this section will be updated.