

## CHAPTER 4

### 4 THE USE OF PLAY THERAPY MEDIUMS WITH CORPORATE EMPLOYEES

*“People play from their earliest months of life and continue to do so in some form or other until they go to the big playground in the sky” Jennings, 1993.*

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Play therapy mediums can be incorporated into a stress management programme for corporate employees as the mediums can be effective in creating an environment in which people can become more aware of themselves and make sensory contact with themselves (Schoeman, 1996:53). Play is not an activity that adults are usually associated with, but play therapy mediums can be incorporated into the stress management programme to give corporate employees the opportunity to become more aware of the causes of stress in their lives.

Schaefer (1993:1) is of the opinion that play is an activity that is more easily recognised when others do it, than when it is defined. Play is an activity that a person wants to partake in – he/she does not have to be motivated to partake in the activity. There are many different uses for play within the therapeutic process. According to Schaefer (1993:4), play therapy is used in different ways by the different schools of play therapy:

***Behavioural play social workers use play for its relaxation properties as***

*well as for helping clients' role play more adaptive behaviours. Psychoanalytic play social workers use interpretations to give clients insight into their unconscious conflicts.*

Ward-Wimmer (2003:2) states that adults can use play as a way in which they can integrate their physical and mental functions.

*...for adults, play continues as an important vehicle because it fosters numerous adaptive behaviours including creativity, role rehearsal and mind/body integration.*

In this way play will enable corporate employees to adapt the behaviour that causes stress in their lives and make a decision to take back the control in their lives. The corporate employees will also have an opportunity to relax and de-stress through the use of play therapy mediums.

In this chapter the focus will be on the definition of play, the history and development of play, the value of play and the play therapy mediums that will form part of the stress management programme. Although the objective is for corporate employees to partake in a stress management programme, the researcher will refer to the person making use of the play therapy mediums as the participant or corporate employee.

## **4.2 DEFINING PLAY**

In theory it seems as if there is some difficulty to come to one single definition of play. Landreth in Schaefer (1993:43) concludes that play is often *easier to recognise and observe than it is to define*. He states that the problem in compiling a definition lies in

the fact that there is not one set of rules or behaviour that includes the different forms of play.

Play has been defined by many authors in different ways. Sapora and Mitchell in Ellis (1973:14) refer to definitions by the following authors:

**Lazarus:** *Play is an activity which is itself free, aimless, amusing or diverting.*

**Dewey:** *Activities not consciously performed for the sake of any result beyond themselves.*

**Gulick:** *What we do because we want to do it.*

**Stern:** *Play is voluntary self sufficient activity.*

**Patrick:** *Those human activities which are free and spontaneous and which are pursued for their own sake. Interest in them is self-sustaining, and they are not continued under any internal or external compulsion.*

**Rainwater:** *Play is a mode of behaviour, ... involving pleasurable activity of any kind, not undertaken for the sake of reward beyond itself...*

**Pangburn:** *Activity carried on for its own sake.*

West (1996:11) defines play as follows:

*...allows opportunities for physical, emotional, cognitive and social growth and is often pleasurable, spontaneous and creative. Play can reduce frightening and traumatic events, it may relieve anxiety and tension; it can aid relaxation, amusement and enjoyment.*

Apart from this, play can be used as a tool in therapy and allows for a cathartic release of feelings and emotions (West, 1996:11). The cathartic release is one of the reasons that play therapy may be effective as part of a stress management programme. The corporate environment does not allow much space for the ventilation of feelings and this programme will give the participants the opportunity to relax and make contact with issues in their lives and in their working environment.

Play is defined by Gitlin-Weiner, Sandgrund and Schaefer (2000:5) as follows:

***Play is pleasurable, spontaneous, voluntary, intrinsically motivated, flexible and a natural product of physical and cognitive growth.***

According to Gitlin-Weiner, *et al* (2000:5), play is considered to be different from other behaviour because of the following reasons:

- **It is pursued for its own sake.**

It is an activity that is performed because it is enjoyable and it is what the person wants to do.

- **Focused on a means rather than on ends.**

The focus is on the play. It is not what the result of the play is going to be. This is one of the reasons that play therapy is de-stressing. There are no expectations from the employees or the social worker.

- **Directed to exploring objects in order to do something with the objects.**

The participant could be asked to explore and decide which miniatures will be used in the sand tray. In this way the participant becomes part of the play therapy process.

- **Not considered a serious endeavour because no realistic result is expected.**

There are no expectations regarding an outcome. The activities are done because the participant wants to do them. He/she should not experience any pressure.

- **Not governed by external rules.**

While working with any specific medium, there are some limitations in the use thereof, for example the participants should not throw the sand out of the tray onto the floor. But, if the participant plays within these limitations he/she can do whatever they like with that play therapy medium.

- **Characterised by active involvement of the player.**

The participant has to be involved in the process. It is not successful play therapy if the social worker or social worker is doing all the playing and the participant is not involved.

According to Landreth in Schaefer (1993:43), the following characteristics are inherent to play:

- Intrinsic motivation.  
The participant has the genuine desire to be doing what he/she is doing. The person participates in the play activity out of his/her own free will.
- Attention is given to what the participant is doing (the process of play) and not to the goal that “should” be achieved. Experiences and interactions are spontaneous and are expressions of the self.
- Play behaviour is often make-believe or fantasy.  
The participants pretend that they are other characters and play out their feelings and experiences in a safe environment.
- Play behaviour does not have a definite set of rules. Rules are made as the play continues. The participants set their own boundaries with regard to their self-expression.
- Play allows the freedom to explore new situations, environment and objects.  
Sensory awareness takes place. The participant can take cognisance of his/her environment and experience it, as if for the first time.
- Play leads to full involvement of the participant.  
The whole focus of the participants is on the activities at hand. They forget about everything else and just play for the allotted time.

Ward-Wimmer (2003:8) states the following regarding play:

***Play, whether with games, puppets, drums, clay, sports, motion, drawing, drama, dolls, sand, or whatever else is available, invited a cascade of positive effects.***

The researcher defines play as an activity in which participants can lose themselves and create some distance between themselves and the pressures of everyday life. They can focus totally on the enjoyable play activity at hand. They can relax whilst experiencing the drawings or the clay at the same time.

As previously mentioned, this chapter will focus on the play therapy mediums that can be included in a stress management programme for corporate employees. However, some attention also needs to be given to the history and development of play.

### **4.3 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY**

Human beings have played since the beginning of time. Lowenfeld in Gitlin-Weiner, *et al.* (2000:1) refers to the fact that archaeological diggings show that every civilisation has had toys that were used for play. Play has always been an activity which was associated with children. It is something that children do before they become adults and are confronted with the real world Cohen (1993:16) states the following about play:

***Victorian society and industry needed to define play and leisure as rare, abnormal activities that were the opposite of that normal activity, work. Thus there were periods in history that it was unacceptable for children and/or adults to play. Everybody had to be busy with work.***

Play was not always considered to be a child's activity. Aristotle believed that improvisations of religious ways became the basis for the comedies that Athens was famous for and he linked play to adult behaviour. Cohen (1993:18) mentions that in the past, play was closely related to adult behaviour:

***...such improvisations suggest that play was not something that only children did but it might have important connections with very adult activities, such as ritual, prayer and drama.***

Play was not a subject that ancient authors such as Plato wrote about. It was something that may have been mentioned but sources indicate that children and adults in ancient Greece and Rome played many of the same games (Cohen, 1993:18). Furthermore, there was some importance given to the observing of play from as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Play was a part of life, but it took a long time before people realised that play could be used as a tool in therapy.

Social workers did not always use play in therapy. Play was often seen as unimportant and just a part of growing up. It was not until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that play was recognised as having some importance in the therapeutic process.

In Gitlin-Weiner, *et al* (2000:2-5), the movement from play towards the use of play in therapy is highlighted as follows:

- 1896: Play was seen as the evidence of progress within a race.
- 1899: Play was seen as instinctive behaviour that people have, to train for future roles.
- 1903: Froebel emphasised the symbolic components of play in his book, *The Education of man*.
- 1909: Freud has a case referred to as "little Hans" and in this case he realises the need for therapy in the child's life but he employs the child's parents to implement the actions. This was the first published case of a psychological approach to working with a child (compare

Landreth, 1991:26).

- 1946 – 1966 Play is incorporated into the therapeutic process more and more by researchers such as Anna Freud and Melanie Klein.
- 1939: Margaret Lowenfeld starts the development of her “Miniature World Technique”, where the sand tray is used in therapy.
- 1950 – 1969: Erikson formulated and published work on child analysis. This was a guideline for using play in therapy.
- 1940 – 1960: Play therapy movement became very active.
- 1952: Piaget’ theory of cognitive development and specifically the impact of symbolic thinking on fantasy and make believe, influenced the use of play in therapy.
- 1964: Virginia Axline wrote the book: “Dibs, in search of self”, which is actually a case study on the use of play therapy with a child in need.
- 1960 – 1980: Different researchers and social workers’ such as Ginott, Moustakas and Pellar made contributions to the application of play therapy and this was central to the understanding of the treatment of the child.

During this period of time the movement was always toward the use of play therapy with children. It was only later that social workers found that play can be used as effectively with adults (refer par 4.5).

#### **4.4 THE VALUE OF PLAY THERAPY:**

According to Schaefer (1993:6-11), the following factors are an indication of the value of play within the therapeutic process:

- **Overcoming resistance**

Play establishes rapport and an alliance with the participants because it is interesting and enjoyable. Many times participants attend therapy or training because they have been asked to do so. Therefore, it is necessary to build a rapport with those participants before starting with any serious “work”.

- **Communication**

Play is a form of communication that is primarily non-verbal and constitutes a non-verbal language as well as verbal language. Play expresses thoughts and feelings on conscious and unconscious levels. Therefore, communication takes place on two levels, the conscious level as well as on the unconscious level. Play provides a window into the inner world of a participant.

- **Mastery**

Play helps the participant to acquire skills that are necessary to be competent in the world. It creates a sense of power and control. Repetition in play allows the opportunity to master the task. Because play is characterised by the qualities of novelty, variability and challenge, people stay interested and they want to repeat the task.

- **Creative thinking**

Through play the participant’s problem solving skills are improved and play promotes creative thinking. Play allows for experimentation with new options

without the fear of negative consequences.

- **Catharsis**

Through play, participants have the opportunity to release their tension and find comfort in the play process. Feelings of anger, guilt or anxiety can be released by the participant in a safe environment.

- **Role play**

The participant is given the opportunity to try out new roles until he/she is comfortable in the role. Thus, there is a feeling of empowerment. Role play helps the participants to step out of themselves and view themselves from another person's point of view. Furthermore, they develop empathy for others because they have to "step into someone else's shoes" for a while.

- **Fantasy**

In a fantasy, the participants have the opportunity to change the world into exactly what and how they want it to be. They enlarge the world by fantasizing about it and they feel in control. Therefore, they develop feelings of mastery over their environment.

- **Metaphoric teaching**

Participants are given the opportunity to change the myths they live by, by identifying with the characters in a story. A sense of "I am not the only one in the world with this problem" is created and as a result the participants feel less

isolated.

The author Ward-Wimmer (2003:4) highlights the advantages of play for all who are involved as follows:

***Play can increase our self esteem. It invites access to states of well-being and calm as well as silliness and joy. When relaxed in play, we often have an increased capacity for empathy and intimacy. Play is affirming.***

#### **4.5 PLAY AS AN ADULT ACTIVITY**

Play comes naturally to children, but adults tend to enjoy play just as much or even more than children when they have the opportunity. When adults play, they have the opportunity to relax and be less competitive than in the “real” world. According to Landreth (1991:36), adult play therapy is not as popular as play therapy with children, but there is an increased interest in the use of play therapy with adults.

According to Cohen (1993:16), play can be used with people in a modern society to relax, in the following way:

***...we have learned that we live in a stress society. To avoid stress, ulcers and heart attacks, it is necessary to relax. We have learned to play with ourselves.***

Landreth (1991:36) agrees and states that play activities create awareness in adults that cannot be accomplished by mere verbalisation, because the adult becomes absorbed in the play activity. Furthermore, because of life experiences, it is often difficult for adults to

play. They have often forgotten the play process and they need to relearn how to play. In this regard, Ward-Wimmer (2003:5) states the following:

***We are, generally, a nation of adults who must relearn the art of playfulness. Actually, most folks are quite willing. They just need permission.***

Play therapy mediums can be included in a stress management programme to give participants the opportunity to play because when people start working, they play less and they become serious about work. According to Ward-Wimmer (2003:5), play can be used to reduce stress in adults.

***Business leaders are discovering the power of play to refresh, nurture and reduce stress. Organisational development professionals often work with staff in playful ways to invite the most genuine, rather than narrow, cognitive responses.***

One of the main goals of a stress management programme is for employees to become more aware of their own process, to become more connected to themselves and to identify the causes of stress in their lives. If this awareness increases they can start changing some of their negative lifestyle habits that lead to stress. The play therapy mediums are sensory mediums and these mediums will be able to enhance the employee's awareness of self and thus the awareness of what causes stress in life.

According to Schaefer (1993:592), some of the advantages for the use of play therapy with adults are as follows:

- ***Play can help them regain their 'child self'.***
- ***Play therapy can help adults to connect with their affective side.***
- ***Play therapy can help adults to get into touch with creative aspects.***
- ***Play therapy can also help highly stressed adults become more relaxed.***
- ***It can provide catharsis for these clients.***
- ***It can help adults to manage boredom and depression.***

The relationship between play and adulthood is emphasized further by Schiller in Cohen (1993:23-24) where he states that reality takes away a persons ability to play if reality is tough. If employees have to focus on feeding, clothing and housing themselves and their families, it becomes difficult to find the time or the motivation to play. Furthermore, Schiller states that play makes people whole and unserious, and that ***through play, reality loses its seriousness.***

A stress management programme will offer employees the opportunity to take a break from the stressors in their lives and to relax through play. According to Cohen (1993:169) it is becoming more and more acceptable for adults to play. This is a difficult thought for many researchers to accept as it was always stated that the reason children play, is to prepare them for adult life and reality. He states the following:

***One mark of the so-called post modern adults is their willingness to play games and sometimes exactly the same games as children.***

The researcher is of the opinion adults will enjoy play during training sessions. The break with reality will give them an opportunity to relax and to become aware of the causes of stress in their lives.

This is one of the reasons that many corporate organisations are incorporating a sense of fun and play in the workplace. Team building activities give corporate employees the opportunity to relax while they play. Lundin, Paul and Christensen (2000:63-66) have made play part of a workplace philosophy. The whole idea is that business is serious but people can still have fun while they are working. The benefits of fun in the workplace are numerous:

- **More business is done while having fun.**

The authors explain that people can still have fun even if they are serious about doing business. The quality of the work has to stay the same but employees can reflect a positive and helpful attitude. When having fun while working, the turnover becomes lower, employees enjoy their work, they feel as if they are in a winning team and they have pride in their work.

- **Morale improves, which leads to a low staff turnover.**

Play at work is a fun-filled way to function. It energises people and they can put their energy into creativity if they choose to have a positive attitude. Employees want to stay in an environment where they are having fun.

- **Colleagues become friends with the other players on the team.**

When employees are having fun, they are happy and when they are happy, they treat others well. They want to be part of a team of people who have a positive attitude and they can enjoy their time together and become more than team players, they become friends.

- **Employees have pride in what they do.**

Employees look for creative ways to engage their customers because it is important to them to render the best service they can.

According to Lundin, Paul, Christensen and Strand (2002:5), play can be part of work in the following way:

*...work made fun gets done, especially when we choose to do serious tasks in a light-hearted, spontaneous way. Play is not just an activity, it is a state of mind that brings new energy to the tasks at hand and sparks creative solutions.*

Play comes naturally to people of all ages but employees tend to get caught up in the corporate pressures and they seem to forget how to play. The corporate environment is starting to encourage “play” in the workplace because it improves morale and creates cohesion within the work environment.

The following play therapy mediums can form part of a stress management programme and will be discussed in more detail:

- **Creative mediums**
  - Drawings (scribble, theme-drawings, finger-paints, body image).
  - Clay.
  - Sand.

- **Dramatised play**
  - Fantasy.
  - Metaphors.
  
- **Relaxation play**
  - The use of music.
  - Muscle relaxation.
  - Breathing exercises.

#### **4.6 DIFFERENT PLAY THERAPY MEDIUMS**

There are different types of play therapy mediums that can be used in therapy or in a training programme. Some participants enjoy certain activities more than others and some social workers are more comfortable with the use of certain play therapy mediums. This is an individualised reaction to the play therapy mediums and the social worker should be aware of this and allow space for it.

There are numerous forms/types of play. Porter (1983:216) lists the following types of play:

- Creative play
- Dramatised play
- Biblio therapy.

However, Kottman & Schaefer (1993:591) refer to other forms of play such as assessment play and relaxation play, and suggests that play therapy with adults can be divided into the following categories:

- Physical play: any activities that are essentially action oriented.
- Manipulative play: when the emphasis in play is controlling and manipulating

the environment.

- Symbolic play: this involves fantasy and art therapy.
- Games: where rules and conversation are included such as with board games.

Creative play, dramatised play (or symbolic play) and relaxation play will be discussed in detail as these are the forms of play that can be used in a stress management programme. Sensory play will not be discussed separately as it is discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Sensory awareness enhances the process where the participants can make contact with themselves and realise the effect of stress on their lives (Schoeman, 1996:53).

#### **4.6.1 Creative Play**

Creative play usually involves some form of art or handwork and it is an opportunity for emotional expression (Van der Merwe, 1996:139). The author Catanach (1993:28) agrees that creative play allows for self expression. Creative play is important for creating awareness and making contact with the “self”. During creative play the participants will have the opportunity to focus on positive and negative aspects of their lives or current situations, therefore, the polarities will be brought to the fore and thereafter integration of those polarities can take place.

##### **4.6.1.1 Sand Play**

The sand tray technique was initially created by Magaret Lowenfeld. She referred to it as the “Miniature World Technique”. With this technique she attempted to structure play. Children were instructed to build a series of scenes in the sand tray with an assortment of objects. Lowenfeld interpreted the different “world scenes” in terms of criteria regarding the content, themes, changes, process and space as follows:

***It (the sand tray) is an apparatus... which will give a child power to express his ideas and feelings; it is independent of knowledge and skill; it is capable of representation of thought simultaneously in several places at once; it allows representation of movement and yet (is) sufficiently circumscribed to make a complete, whole... (it) combines elements of touch and sensation, as well as sight, and (it is) entirely free from a necessary relation to reality (Lowenfeld in Gitlin-Weiner, et al: 2000:4).***

The sand is a tactile medium that helps participants to make use of their senses to create greater self awareness. Most people enjoy the feeling of sand between their fingers. Sand play adds a tactile dimension to play and this increases the participant's sensory awareness (Carey, 1990:198).

Sand play can work effectively with adults as well as with children. Mitchell and Friedman (2003: 195) state the following regarding sand play:

***Sand play therapy gives adult clients the opportunity to portray, rather than verbalise feelings and experiences that are often difficult to express in words. Therapists and clients alike have found that the sand play scenes, created with sand, water and miniatures in a shallow box, serve as a window into the unconscious that contributes a surprising, new vantage point from which to nurture and experience healing and transformation.***

The researcher has experienced that children as well as adults enjoy working with the sand. Oaklander (1988:166) states that people spontaneously start playing in the

sand tray without motivation. The sand tray gives the person a sense of control because it is so much smaller than the real world. The value of the sand tray is as follows:

- Sand is tactile, yet provides a total kinaesthetic involvement (sensory awareness).
- Sand play allows the person to be in total control of the activity and to experience a sense of his/her own inner power.
- Sand play encourages verbalisation in those cases where poor verbal skills exist (Oaklander, 1988:164).
- Fears and fantasies that are usually suppressed can be projected into the sand (West, 1996:75).
- The person can metaphorically play out a traumatic event in the sand, whilst distancing him/herself from the event (Jennings, 1993:15).
- Awareness is facilitated;
- An opportunity to ventilate feelings is given (McMahon, 1992:63).
- When playing with sand the innocent, unsophisticated, and unconscious elements of the psyche are allowed to emerge (Mitchell & Friedman, 2003: 195).

According to Oaklander (1988:169), many Jungian social workers use the sand tray technique with adults and states that the sand tray has no age limit. If a person has experienced an emotional trauma he often finds it difficult to verbalise feelings. There is often an inconsistency between feelings and thoughts. The sand tray helps participants who have difficulty in expressing themselves to ventilate more freely. They metaphorically play out the traumatic event that was experienced and because the situation is reconstructed on a smaller scale, the participants feel empowered. After verbalisation of emotions, participants start to work on a solution to the situation

and can play that out in the sand tray. Carey (1990:193) states that the participants are in control of the sand tray and, therefore, they experience a sense of their own power.

According to West (1996:75), a sand tray should be created by the participants about whatever they want to create and that the social worker should not interfere or interpret the "picture". On the other hand, Oaklander in Jennings (1993:18) describes how she guides children during play therapy with the sand tray, as follows:

***...goal is to help the child become aware of herself and her existence in the world. Each social worker will find his own style in achieving that delicate balance between directing and guiding the session on the one hand, and going with and following the child's lead on the other.***

The sand tray will evoke the same awareness with adults as with children, but the social worker has to feel comfortable using the sand tray technique. If he/she is not comfortable, the participants will sense it and they will not feel comfortable doing the sand tray technique, either. Furthermore, if there are time constraints, it is easier if the participants are given a theme to work according to in the sand tray.

When using the sand tray, different objects can be used metaphorically. These objects can come from nature or the objects can be miniature characters which are sold commercially (this will be discussed in more detail later). The natural objects enhance the sensory experience of the participants. Each of the participants can choose the objects that they are going to use from nature. This will empower the participants and give them a sense of control.

- **The use of the sand tray**

The sand tray is all about the participants creating their own miniature world in the sand. The following is needed to use the sand tray successfully:

- A sand tray – approximately 50cm on each side.
- Miniature figures such as little soldiers, animals, farmers, play house, castle, cars, babies etc. with which the person can create his/her own scene in the sand (Oaklander, 1988:166-167; West, 1992:75).

Working with the sand tray differs from person to person and from social worker to social worker. Oaklander (1988:169) follows the following process:

- Allow the participants to choose objects that they can use to build a sand scene.
- Tell them to build a scene in the sand. If they have difficulty with this, tell them to close their eyes and picture a happy/sad (stressful or not) situation in their minds and then create that picture in the sand.
- Ask them to tell you a story about the scene created in the sand.
- Motivate them to tell the story in the here and now (Gestalt).
- Let them conduct a dialogue between the objects in the sand tray.
- Let them say what is going to happen in the sand scene in the future (the researcher is of the opinion that participants can be asked how they would like the scene to play out in future, which creates an opportunity for closure of unfinished business).
- The social worker can decide to what extent he/she wants to be involved in the sand scene.

According to Ley and Howze (1993:333), it is effective to make use of photos that can be taken while the participants are working in the sand tray as well as after the sand tray has been completed. The photos should be pasted onto wooden blocks and laminated so that they can be placed in an upright position in the sand tray. The participants can be asked to bring photos along or the photos that were taken by the social worker can be used, and the pasting of the photos onto the wooden blocks can form part of the sand tray session.

West (1996:75) states that the social worker should not get involved in the sand scene and that he/she can gain much more information about the participants by letting the process flow. The researcher agrees with West, but when there is a time constraint it is sensible to have a more directive approach and to guide the participants through the therapeutic process. Furthermore, any handy material can be used in the sand scene. The participants often make use of natural materials such as sticks, stones and leaves, which are found in the surrounding area. In this way the participants are involved in the whole process and it creates awareness when they have to look for the natural substances they are going to use. It is also a sensory experience when they have to look, touch, smell and listen to the sounds in the surroundings.

As mentioned before, there are different roles that the social worker can take on in working with the sand scene. He/she can be actively involved or he/she can let the process play out at its own pace. According to Gill (1991:27), sand play is a window through which the researcher can look into the participants' world.

The social worker must guide the participants to greater self awareness. He/she must be focused on the participants' processes: How do they go about creating the sand

scene? How do they select the sand miniatures? How do they go about creating the scene? What are their individual styles? Are they organised or disorganised when creating the sand scene (Carey, 1990:197)? All of these aspects give the social worker some information regarding the participants, which enables the social worker to give feedback to them. According to Jennings (1993:18), the social worker must be intent on the non-verbal cues such as tone of voice, posture, facial expressions and breathing that the employees convey whilst building the sand scene. This gives the social worker some information regarding the participants' processes.

Sand play is a medium that works effectively with people of all ages. Most people can identify with sand play and can form associations that facilitate greater self awareness. Sand play gives the employees the opportunity to address difficult situations in their lives through creative, imaginary and symbolic play. It is a fun experience that is not "normal" for adults, but it is an experience that brings back memories and which can help adults to make contact with themselves and address the issues in their foreground.

#### **4.6.1.2 Clay**

Clay is a medium that people of all ages and from all backgrounds can relate to. People who grew up in rural areas often had to make their toys from clay or mud because there were no other toys available, so they usually enjoy working with the clay. Children in cities seldom play with clay in an informal setting such as a riverbank or farmyard and, therefore, they enjoy the clay work because it is often a new experience to them. According to Jennings (1993:90), clay is a sensory medium that the participants can feel, smell and even taste. It can be used to ***develop or express touch sensation, but also to activate other senses and to provide the context for imaginative play.***

Furthermore, clay work stimulates sensory experiences and absorbs and/or re-directs the discharge of aggression. The use of clay with people in therapy can be traced back to the work of Lowenfeld. He made use of clay in therapy as a means of developing self-awareness, self image and self concept. His focus was on the relationship to self and the relationship to others. Oaklander (1988:67) refers to clay as one of her favourite mediums. She mentions the following as advantages of the use of clay:

- ***It leaves a person feeling good and relaxed.***
- ***It is flexible and malleable.***
- ***It affords opportunity for flow between itself and the user unequalled by any other material.***
- ***It is easy to become one with the clay.***
- ***It offers both tactile and kinaesthetic experience (opportunity for sensory experience).***
- ***It brings people closer to their feelings.***
- ***The sensuousness of the clay often gives them a bridge between their senses and their feelings.***
- ***Anger can be ventilated through clay in numerous ways.***
- ***Those who are insecure and fearful can feel a sense of control and mastery through clay.***
- ***It is appealing to every age.***

Winship and Haigh (1998:81) suggest another advantage of clay which is the fact that it can be used effectively as a group activity. The group can work together to create a sculpture and a discussion can follow from there.

Furthermore, West (1996:89) mentions that clay allows for messy and sophisticated, symbolic play depending on what the participants want to do with it:

- ***It allows for three-dimensional work.***
- ***It is flexible and can be moulded and changed.***
- ***It sometimes has more reality than painting a drawing.***
- ***People can change their minds as they go along and thus change their creation.***

Clay gives the participants the opportunity to master their own creations. During the stress management programme the employees can have the opportunity to create their stressors in the clay, take control and ventilate anger by hitting the clay, throwing it or breaking it. The use of the clay as play therapy medium will facilitate this process (Schoeman, 1996:51). Therefore, this will be empowering for the participants as they will feel that they can control the stressful situation, which in real life seems beyond their control.

It is sometimes necessary to introduce clay in a cautious manner. The medium may generate some resistance. Simple demonstrations of the pliable qualities of clay are enough to generate curiosity and very often the person takes up the clay of his own accord. The researcher has experienced that some people are not comfortable with the sensation of the clay on their hands. They often work with the clay by using only their fingertips and as soon as the activity is completed, they go and wash their hands. The researcher has never found that a participant refuses to take part in the clay activity. Usually clay is one of the most enjoyable activities for the participants.

- **The use of clay**

According to Schoeman (1996:51), it is important to allow an opportunity for the participants to experience the clay, otherwise it is difficult for them to create something from it. The process that is used by Oaklander (1988:69–71) is as follows:

- The participants breathe in deeply and breathe out.
- While their eyes are closed they become aware of the temperature of the clay.
- They breathe in deeply and breathe out slowly.
- They breathe in and feel the air move through their arms, out through their fingertips and into the clay. This is repeated a few times.
- They open their eyes and experience the texture of the clay (smell, feel and taste).
- They kneed the clay, punch it, make holes in the clay and throw the clay repeatedly as hard as they can (this gives them permission to do whatever they like with the clay when and after they have completed their creation).
- With their eyes open or closed, they can create something out of the clay.
- They give the creation a voice and describe the creation's life or circumstances.
- This is then related back to the participant's own life.

Therefore, this process can also be done as part of relaxation therapy because of the focus on the breathing and the awareness that is created through this.

According to West (1996:89), the process can be very simple and easy:

- The participants can be invited to handle the clay, noting what it feels like

and its texture.

- This is a tactile experience and therefore awareness is created and the participants can make associations from the sensory experience with the clay.
- How do you feel while you are working with the clay?
- The participants are given the opportunity to make contact with their feelings. The clay is the ideal medium whereby the employees can ventilate these feelings.
- Use the clay to model a theme.
- The participants are invited to make a model out of the clay, guided by one of the following themes:
  - ❖ Their family: the participants can portray their whole family or they can focus on an incident that occurred in their family.
  - ❖ Television characters: People often identify with television characters. The participants may be invited to portray a situation through television characters.
  - ❖ Animals: Participants often have animals take on the personalities of family members and much information is gained when the animals are related to the different family members.
  - ❖ Monsters: Participants often experience certain situations in their lives as monsters. They have the opportunity to create these monsters in the clay and destroy them, which is an empowering activity.
  - ❖ Feelings: Participants can create a sculpture in the clay that portrays their feelings and a conversation about those feelings can be formulated.

Clay is an easy medium to use as it is not bound by culture or race. It is a projection technique that can be used effectively with any participant, from any social standing and it allows for an experience at a very deep level. According to Winship and Haigh (1998:71), clay can be used to form an object from the images in the participant's mind. They continue to say that clay can be a facilitator for effective communication, especially in times when verbal communication is difficult. In this article the author also states that clay can be used metaphorically and even a simple pot can assume a functional, aesthetic role. The researcher agrees with this statement and adds that participants often project their feelings onto the object that they have created and, without realising it, assume the role of the clay object.

#### **4.6.1.3 Drawings**

Drawing is one of the mediums used most often by social workers. Oaklander (1988:177) suggests the following about drawings:

***...drawings are like dreams, they tend to make accurate statements about what is going on in one's life at the moment.***

Piaget and Inhelder in West (1996:83) state the following:

***...drawings and play have a special place in linking the internal and external domains.***

Therefore, greater self awareness is established through drawings. Participants may realise that drawings are an extension of themselves. This is a popular medium with participants of all ages. According to West (1996:65), ***art is a wonderful and satisfying form of self-expression.*** Thompson and Rudolph (1992) agree that

drawings are often used in Gestalt to verbalise emotions. When emotions are verbalised the participants can start to regain balance in their lives.

There are many different types of drawings that can be used in play therapy, for example participants can be asked to create drawings with a certain theme, or to make a scribble or to create a body image drawing. With all the different types of drawings, different creative mediums such as crayons, pastels, paint or finger paint can be utilised. This medium allows the participants to make choices and with the making of these small choices, they can move towards taking responsibility for their lives.

- **Drawing according to a theme:**

Participants can be invited to create drawings according to certain themes (Oaklander, 1988:64 & 65). The following are examples of themes that they can be asked to draw:

- What you do when you are angry?
- A scary place?
- A place that makes you happy?
- Where you wish you could be – an ideal place?
- Feelings: good or bad?
- The best part of yourself?
- Worst part of yourself?
- Three images of yourself?

Some attention needs to be given to the interpretation of drawings. West (1996:70) emphasises that interpretation and analysis by the social worker is

not necessary and states that it can be very irresponsible to make interpretations of drawings of participants that partake in the activity. Occasionally it may be appropriate to ask the creator of the drawing what is happening in the drawing and why, or invite them to tell the picture's story. The researcher is of the opinion that the participating employee can be asked about the drawing. The participants are entitled to answer the questions to the extent that they feel comfortable. The importance here is that the social worker does not make an interpretation without it being confirmed by the participants who created the drawings.

Most of the mediums in play therapy can be used as metaphors. According to Frey in Schaefer (1993:221), participants can be asked to draw the following:

***...draw his pain as it is right now, how the pain would look when it is 'all better', and what will help the first picture to change into the second picture.***

Snyder (1997:2) state that people are invited to create a drawing with finger paint of anything that can be related to their lives:

***Finger paints and paper are made available with the directions of "paint a picture of something important to you, or of a dream, or of your family doing something together."***

Rosen in Snyder (1997:3) states the following regarding the use of art in therapy:

***...the archetypal conflict tormenting the patient's soul is made visible in image form, so the patient can confront it and decide what to do with the part of the psyche to which it refers.***

Metaphors are interwoven into the therapeutic process and all the different mediums can be used as metaphors for the participants' circumstances. They have the opportunity to live out the conflicts that they are experiencing through the creative mediums.

The following working model was created by Oaklander (1988:53) to guide the social worker and the client to interpret the projection:

- Have the participant share the experience of the drawing with you.
- Have the participant share the actual drawing with you, describing the picture in his/her own words.
- Motivate the participant to describe different parts of his/her drawing on a deeper level.
- Ask the participant to describe the drawing as if it were him/her, using the word "I".
- Choose specific themes in the drawing for the participant to identify with.
- Ask the participant questions to help the process along (What are you doing? Is there someone with you?).
- Focus the participant's attention and sharpen his/her awareness by emphasising and exaggerating a part or parts of the picture.
- Ask the participant to have a dialogue between two parts of the picture.
- Encourage the participant to focus on the colours that were used.
- Take note of the participant's tone of voice, body posture, facial and body expression, breathing and silences.

- Help the participant to own the picture.
- Link the drawing to the participant's own life situations.
- Focus on the missing parts and empty spaces in the picture.
- Stay with the participant's foreground.

The social worker can ask the participant to give the drawing a name or a theme and create a story about the drawing. The above mentioned model is an important guideline to keep in mind, but in the researcher's experience it is very difficult to use all 14 steps during therapy with a person. The social worker should use the steps that are appropriate at that moment in time.

The following aspects are important when working with drawings:

- **Be sensitive to parts that are missing from the drawing.**

Ask the creator of the drawing about missing parts, for example if he/she has drawn a self portrait but the figure does not have hands, ask him/her about the fact that there are no hands. Do not make an interpretation without enquiring.

- **What is inferred and/or represented in the drawing?**

Find out from the participant what it is that the drawing would like to say to the world. What is the drawing about?

- **Be prepared to find the unexpected and the unwelcome.**

Do not be surprised if the picture relates to a sad or violent incident in the

participant's life. This is unfinished business that has come to the fore by means of the drawing.

- **Colours are important and can convey a message of their own.**

The social worker can ask simple questions about the colours that were used, for example: "I see you have used much yellow in your picture; how do you feel when you see yellow?"

Drawings should not be evaluated aesthetically. It is important that the participants have the freedom to express themselves according to whatever needs experienced and that the drawing is not criticised. The drawing has to be seen as valuable (West, 1996:84).

- **Drawing a scribble**

This technique can be used at any stage of the therapeutic process. The technique can be used as an ice breaker, as an activity when the participants are anxious or just as a fun activity. With this technique there is no pressure on the employees to perform. The following steps are emphasised by Hartley-Lowe (1997:122) as important when doing this activity with a group:

- Ask the participants if they would be willing to play a drawing game.
- The participants receive a large sheet of paper and each of them can choose a coloured crayon to draw his/her scribble.
- Ask the participants to make a quick scribble on the paper, in relays, so the first person starts the scribble and the next continues the scribble.
- Each participant has a turn to add something small, as the objective is for

each participant to have more than one turn before the picture is completed.

- Once the picture is completed the social worker can decide if he/she wants to facilitate a discussion regarding the drawing, or if she/he wants to give positive feed-back to the participants for participating.

According to Kramer in Oaklander (1988:37) the scribble is a very unthreatening technique to help people express something about their inner self. The following steps are suggested by Oaklander (1988:37-38) when making use of the scribble:

- Make a drawing in the air, using your whole body.
- Draw these movements, with eyes closed, on a large sheet of paper.
- Examine the scribble from all sides and complete the picture if necessary.
- Tell a story about the picture.

The researcher would also ask the participating employees to give the drawing a “name” and they can tell the group how this picture relates to their lives.

- **Body image drawing**

This technique is used by many social workers in different ways. It helps people to make contact with themselves. Turner (1997:108) refers to the technique as “outline drawings”. She has the drawings (the outlines of males and females) available before the clients arrive for therapy and they can get an opportunity to fill in the missing parts and/or feelings that they are experiencing. She makes use of the drawings as metaphors, the clients see the drawings as someone else but they project their own feelings and experiences onto the drawing (Turner, 1997:108).

Employees will enjoy being involved with the drawing of the outline of the picture. They can be asked to lie on a big sheet of paper, on the floor and the outline of one of their bodies is drawn on the paper by one of the other employees. After this, the employees can draw their own feelings and experiences on the paper. This makes the activity more personal.

Drawing is a medium which is enjoyable to participants. In a stress management programme, relaxation is one of the goals that need to be accomplished. Relaxation play offers the participant the opportunity to de-stress.

#### **4.6.2 Relaxation Play**

There are different types of relaxation play which are experienced by many people as relaxing. It is, however, important to remember that individuals react differently to different relaxation activities. Some activities have a positive effect on some participants while others may experience more stress and anxiety. Play is experienced by many people as a form of recuperating from the effects of the work that they do and also part of the process of restoring the body of the person after hard work. Lazarus is of the opinion that ongoing responding may have a negative influence on the person and the negative effect is best eliminated by play (Ellis, 1973:33). The person can find release in play and forget about or learn to cope better with reality.

There are different types of relaxation play and the following will be discussed in more detail: relaxation with music, muscle relaxation and breathing exercises.

- **Music**

The use of music in therapy is becoming common practice to many social workers. According to Carmichael (2002:223) Bender and Woltman recorded their use of music as an adjunct to play therapy in 1941. Music has been used for many years in play therapy because it is a soothing medium and the use thereof can be as enjoyable for the social worker as for the participants. Music can create a relaxed atmosphere for therapy and it can also be used as an ice breaker, which can prompt discussions (Van der Merwe, 1996:78). Huizinga (1994:25) states that music relaxes a person in body and in mind:

***This occurs whether they are taking part in the musical activity, or merely lying on the floor and listening to the music.***

Music can be used:

- To create a relaxed climate.
- To help with communication and expression.
- To reduce tension.
- To bring an element of fun to the activity.
- As a support system.
- In combination with the muscle relaxation exercise.

(Van der Merwe, 1996:78)

It is important to take note of the fact that no person is too sick or too disabled to react to music. It has an effect on all people to a lesser or greater extent. The use of music in therapy is not focused on the verbal ability of the client – it is non-verbal and words are not necessary (Carmichael, 2000:224). According to

Huizinga (1994:24) this aspect of music can be used positively during the stress management training. The music could be part of the experience and there should be no added pressure on the individual to express him/herself. Huizinga (1994: 24) continues by saying that people move to the sound of the music and this may have an effect on their stress levels:

***The advantages in rhythmic movement are that, in addition to the pleasure derived, stress and anxiety are dealt with.***

Research has shown that there is a relationship between breathing and music. Listening to music causes changes in respiration and can induce inner calm and peace.

The researcher is of the opinion that music can be used as part of an ice breaker in a stress management programme. It can be used to set the mood for the rest of the training and can be used throughout the programme whilst activities take place and specifically during the fantasies and visualisation exercises.

- **Muscle Relaxation**

The participants can learn to relax different muscle groups in their bodies until they systematically relax their whole body. The participant's awareness of tension in his/her body is heightened. Their attention is focused on one group of muscles at a time. They have to contract those muscles and keep them tense for approximately five to ten seconds and then relax totally. The muscle groups are contracted one by one to ensure that the whole body relaxes (Van der

Merwe, 1996:78).

Muscle relaxation is often followed by guided imagery. The advantages of guided imagery are that participants gain a sense of mastery over their bodies and their feelings and they are allowed to use their imagination to create hypothetical life situations and try out alternative solutions (O'Connor, 1997:6-7). During this activity the participants can be encouraged to lie down or sit as comfortably as possible and the muscle relaxation is completed systematically.

Muscle relaxation techniques can be used as part of a fantasy or a visualisation activity. The activity can start off with the muscle relaxation, continue into the visualisation and finish with focusing on breathing and relaxing.

- **Breathing**

Breathing patterns often reveal emotions. People who are anxious breathe faster and talk as they breathe in, but people who are depressed sigh regularly and talk as they breathe out (Looker & Gregson, 2003:131). According to Schoeman (1996:54), ***an important part of relaxation is breath flow.*** A person can be helped to do breathing exercises which provides more oxygen and enables better control over his/her body (Schoeman, 1996:54). The following procedure is suggested by Looker and Gregson (2003:132):

- ***Lie on the floor on your back.***
- ***Support your head on a pillow.***
- ***Bend your knees, keeping your feet flat on the floor.***
- ***Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your abdomen.***

- ***Breathe slowly through your nose.***
- ***Keep your mouth closed.***
- ***Take slow gentle deep breaths.***
- ***As you inhale push your abdomen out against your hand – feel your abdomen expand and your hand rise.***
- ***Hold for two seconds and the exhale slowly through your nose.***
- ***Feel your stomach deflate and your hand fall.***
- ***Repeat four times.***

This relaxation method may create physical awareness within a person. Whilst doing the breathing, he/she may become aware of the movement of their abdomen and other muscles in their bodies.

#### **4.6.2.1 Dramatised Play**

Dramatised play allows the participants the opportunity to give life to their feelings, wishes and ideas through fantasy, imagery and metaphors.

According to Van der Merwe (1996:128), the advantages of dramatised play are:

- ***That the participants can ventilate intense emotions and relive situations that are troubling.***
- ***The participants are in control of the situation – and this can be very empowering.***
- ***Communication is simplified.***
- ***Behavioural change can take place as the participants identify solutions for their situations.***

The focus of the following section will be on the role of fantasy, imagery and metaphors.

- **Fantasy and Imagery**

The word fantasy is derived from the Latin word *phantasticus*. It incorporates different kinds of mental images such as fairy tales, fables, metaphors, symbolic and creative play and extensions of the person's imagination. Fantasy creates a world away from reality (Schoeman, 1996:85). According to Marvasti (1997:35), ***tales and story telling for the purpose of learning and healing is an ancient phenomenon***. Fantasy and imagery are linked to each other. Singer (1998:83) mentions the following in this regard:

***...images appear to be associated with the right hemisphere of the brain and its function which include visual and auditory imagery, spatial representation, pure melodic thought, fantasy and emotional components of ongoing thought.***

Fantasy can be used in co-ordination with music and relaxation exercises. The fantasy can be told by the social worker or it can be started by one person in the group and each person in the group has an opportunity to add onto the fantasy.

An important function of the fantasy is to allow the person to become aware of feelings, attitudes and opinions of others. This creates an atmosphere of understanding. The participants can consider alternative solutions to the problems at hand (Schoeman, 1996:85). It is a way for the participants to

realise that they are not the only people who experience that situation and that there are alternative solutions to the problem.

- **Metaphor**

The play therapy mediums are all metaphors for feelings or experiences in peoples' lives and therefore, the metaphor forms an integral part of play therapy. Haarhoff (1998:86) describes a metaphor as follows:

***A metaphor is a condensed image, a concentrated form, a shortened simile, a simile implied as fact. Instead of saying A is like B we say A is B or we call A, B.***

A metaphor has the effect of allowing the reader to think of an ordinary object in a different way. It broadens the reader's outlook (Haarhoff, 1998:86) and it communicates with the person through images. These images often simplify understanding. According to Bowman (1995:206), metaphors are valuable therapeutic tools for working with adults and children because they help explain experiences that are not easily described.

The metaphor is often used as part of a fantasy. Schoeman (1996:87-89) highlights the different functions of the metaphor as follows:

- **Emphatic understanding**

It is often easier to accept a difficult situation when you know you are not the only one that has been through such an experience. Adults and children often find it comforting to hear about people with circumstances similar to their own.

- **Coping with fear**

Many people are ashamed of expressing their feelings of fear. Fantasies can be threatening to these people, especially if it brings them too near to the reality of their own situation. A fantasy can help the person to become aware of his fear and to release his feelings of pain.

- **Consolation of the ego**

A metaphor is a way to help people gain control over their lives. As soon as they see how the character in the story is coping with his/her problems, they can relate to it and adapt their behaviour accordingly.

- **Concretising solutions**

Sometimes the fear or problem that the person is experiencing is not concrete. It helps if the person can visualise the fear or problem, then he/she can start working on solutions to solve the problem.

***Metaphors can build the bridge to make situations that are full of fear and emotion, more concrete (Schoeman, 1996:90)***

Marvasti (1997:36) states that stories can be used to suggest new possibilities and to get the client's total attention. Most people, young and old, enjoy a good story. If the story has a therapeutic component it will not be lost on the listener.

- **Examples stimulate new behaviour**

People learn from the example that has been set in the fantasy. Their behaviour can be modelled according to that of the characters in the story.

- **Giving hope**

The stories create hope and optimism when the person is exposed to the happy endings (Marvasti, 1997:36).

This is especially true when the people listening to the story can generalise aspects of the story to their lives. If they are in more or less the same situation as is portrayed in the story, the happy ending will give them some hope.

According to Haarhoff (1998:87), a person should not complicate the metaphor too much. The image has to become real to the person to whom it is being related, otherwise it loses the impact that was hoped for. The listener should not have to “work out” the metaphor, it should ***be like a splash of cold water in the face.***

The metaphors in a story form should include the following aspects:

- A hero – who has the same conflicts and weaknesses as the listener.
- An opportunity for catharsis – the character in the story must ventilate emotions at some stage, with which the listener can identify.
- A positive and a successful ending – because this brings hope (Compare Marvasti, 1997:37; Schoeman, 1996:90).

The use of clay, sand and drawings are metaphoric expressions of what the participants are experiencing. Metaphors are used every day in many different ways and people do not even realise that they are making use of metaphors. These metaphors describe the experiences that people have and they create images in their minds while they are listening to someone or explaining an aspect to someone. Metaphors are useful in play therapy as people often forget much of the information given to them, but they remember the picture that was created by the metaphor.

#### **4.7 CONCLUSION**

Play therapy mediums can be used over a broad spectrum. The mediums are effective with children as well as with adults and are enjoyed by both children and adults. Adults often do not have the time or they forget how enjoyable “play” can be. A stress management programme which includes play therapy mediums, can allow adults the opportunity to play.

The focus of this chapter was on the different play therapy mediums and how they can be used with adults. Some attention was given to defining play therapy and the therapeutic use thereof. Play was always seen as part of growing up and as a model for adult life. Historically it became obvious that adults do play. Society expects adult fun to be on a sport or religious level.

If a stress management programme includes play therapy mediums such as drawings, sand tray, clay, metaphors and fantasy, the adults will have the opportunity to make contact with themselves and self awareness will be enhanced.

The following chapter will focus on organisational behaviour and how the corporate employee's stress levels may be affected by his/her job.