



# WORLD JOURNAL FOR SAND THERAPY PRACTICE

PROMOTING THE ETHICAL PRACTICE OF SAND THERAPY

## Editor's Commentary

### Focus on Research

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It's always a delight to publish sand therapy research. Our article this issue is Dr. Mindy Parsons' research with elderly individuals diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease is an important addition to our field. With a mixed methods design, she found participants were able to use symbols in the sand to connect with inner thoughts and feelings. She states, "it appeared unmistakable that each sand tray was filled with symbolic expressions of healing, fears, challenges, blessings, and hope." Enjoy reading this research!

Also, another meta-analysis of sand therapy research was published in the *Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling*. Based on 36 studies, including sandplay and sandtray therapy, significant findings help inform our work. See the full abstract and citation below. We appreciate Dr. Ryan Holliman and Dr. Ryan Foster's research. This is the fourth meta-analysis of sand therapy research. The others, Koh and Ha (2022), Lee and Jang (2015), and Wiersman et al. (2021), all found a medium to large effect size. This growing body of research strengthens our field.

If you are aware of any other research, published or unpublished, please let me know! We want to either publish it here or highlight it. Our collective awareness of all the research available enhances us all.

Holliman, R. & Foster, R. D. (2023) The way we play in the sand: A meta-analytic investigation of sand therapy, its formats, and presenting problems, *Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling*, 9(2), 205-221, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23727810.2023.2232142>

#### ABSTRACT

Sand therapy is a group of expressive arts interventions that is implemented with a variety of age groups that present to therapy with any number of chief complaints. In this study, we sought to

establish an overall effect size for sand therapy, its efficacy with a variety of presenting problems, and the impact moderator variables may have had on effect size. For this meta-analysis, 36 studies were included, which yielded a Hedges'  $g$  of 1.165. Additionally, meta-analyses were conducted on several different presenting problems including anxiety ( $k = 7, g = 1.425$ ), anger ( $k = 5, g = .760$ ), depression ( $k = 7, g = 1.071$ ), parent-child relationship issues ( $k = 5, g = 3.932$ ), and self-esteem ( $k = 6, g = 1.588$ ). The impact of moderator analyses was conducted which indicated that sand therapy was as effective in group formats ( $k = 11, g = 1.073$ ) as it was in individual settings ( $k = 7, g = 1.285$ ). Additionally, age groups were analyzed, which indicated that sand therapy had high effect sizes that were roughly the same for adults ( $k = 14, g = 1.414$ ), adolescents ( $k = 8, g = 1.035$ ), and children ( $k = 14, g = 1.112$ ). We discuss clinical implications for the use of sand therapy and further research suggestions.

### References

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- Hong, G. (2011). *Sandplay therapy: Research and practice*. Routledge. First published in Chinese in 2007.
- Wiersman, J. K., Freedle, L. R., McRoberts, R., & Solberg, K. B. (2022). A meta-analysis of sandplay therapy treatment outcomes. *International Journal of Play Therapy, 21*(4), 197-215.