

## Filial Therapy: the Challenges of Parents as the Therapeutic Agents for Children

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### **Abstract**

Filial therapy has developed over 40 years in western culture and has been considered an effective way to help parents and children to change. According to the past experience, people who drop out can not get the benefit.

This research is a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach to examine 8 Chinese attendees' (6 mothers, 1 fathers and 1 grandmother) perceptions of the difficulties they encountered in the filial therapy training process. The Landreth's 10-week filial therapy model was adopted to train parents as the therapeutic agents for their children. Parents were trained with basic child-centered play therapy skills in the group, and applied those skills in weekly play sessions with their children at home. They were evaluated through telephone interview within 48 hours after the end of every session.

The significant findings indicate that the trainees met various kinds of difficulties in the process. First, to change their parenting ways, especially expressing love and care in the ways of asking questions and giving direct advice to their children. They also felt uneasy to play with their children. Second, to practice reflective listening, to tell children's real need, to reflect in proper words, to respond as soon as possible, and to restate instead of repeating are tough work for them. Third, when holding the play session at home, they were concerned about their capability to be a therapeutic agent. They worried their response to their children were improper. They did not know how to arrange the toys at home, and how to overcome their anxiety when children keep silent in the play session. Fourth, when recording during the play session, some families did not have video camera, some parents did not know how to record, and others were interfered by the recording helper. Finally, the trainees felt pressure in the group when they were supervised. They worried about their poor performance. Though they think group supervision was helpful to them, they also felt progress competitiveness and the compared pressure to be supervised at the same group.

The findings and analysis of this study suggest the researchers and practical workers reducing the dropping out crisis for parents.

Key words: filial therapy; play therapy