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FOREWORD

The Medicine Wheel is an ancient symbolic way of looking at the cycles of life, elements of nature, cardinal directions, and healing through the eyes of almost all North and South American Native people. While each tribe has a different way of describing the meaning of the symbols attributed to each of the four directions, the unifying point is that healing is seen as a balance between mental, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects of our human nature. All four aspects must be in balance in order for well-being to occur. It is clear to me that Lorri Yasenik and Ken Gardner have created a groundbreaking paradigm for the field of play therapy that metaphorically encompasses the heart and spirit of the Medicine Wheel, namely, that in order for a child to heal, each element within their Play Therapy Dimensions Model needs to be fluid, flexible, and complementary to one another.

Valuing the uniqueness of the child, common developmental pathways, and the role of the play therapist, Lorri and Ken provide us with two dimensions: Consciousness and Directiveness within their model. Explained with clarity and precision, Lorri and Ken describe the Consciousness dimension as a *weaving* process moving vertically between *Conscious* and *Unconscious* expressions of the child's play within the session. In other words, some feelings may be expressed unconsciously using symbols to represent the expression, while at other times in the same session, direct communication may occur between therapist and the child. In a Medicine Wheel, *Consciousness* would be likened to the North direction, and *Unconscious*, the South direction.

The Directiveness dimension focuses on the therapist's degree and level of immersion in the session. Designed to move along a horizontal line, this dimension describes play therapy in terms of *non-directiveness* and *directiveness*, providing concrete examples throughout the book and DVD. According to the model's diagram, *Non-directiveness* would be in the West and *Directiveness* would be in the East direction of a Medicine Wheel. And as we know in all journeys, we move through many directions in order to arrive at our destination. Therefore, Lorri and Ken continually stress the importance of flexibility on the part of the therapist to shift therapeutic strategies in the playroom using these dimensions as a framework for interaction and assessment.

Similar to the Medicine Wheel's four aspects of human nature (mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual), the circular diagram of Lorri and Ken's model is divided into four quadrants: ***Active Utilization, Open Discussion and Exploration, Non-Intrusive Responding, and Co-facilitation***. Of particular importance to me, is the inclusive philosophy that all approaches to play therapy can be conceptualized within the four quadrants. With this essential philosophy threaded throughout the book and DVD, it is clear that the Play Therapy Dimensions Model is designed so therapists can open the doors between the quadrants, thereby accessing multiple ways of interacting with children in any given session.

Beyond the specifics of their model, which are beautifully described and demonstrated in the DVD that accompanies the book, is its heart, the beliefs and assumptions of Lorri and Ken. What particularly touched me was and is their inherent sensitivity and authentic humility which streams through while describing their model.

Additionally, two very talented play therapists, Lynde Hill and Susan James, and two expressive children, Ellis and Haley, eloquently show us *how* each quadrant being addressed looks in an actual session. I felt the professional skills of the therapist shine as they relate to the children who express difficult challenges and feelings throughout their sessions.

It is clear to me that if therapists are willing to stretch beyond the scope of their theoretical training, they will be able to weave new vision, creativity, and breadth into their work. They will be able to see a Medicine Wheel of a new kind, one that traverses the realm of play therapy and challenges us to open our minds to the heart-felt teachings of Lorri Yasenik and Ken Gardner who have provided a clear pathway for us to venture. We need only take a step into this new *dimension* and learn.

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