

Parents as Agents of Change in Their Children's Lives: A Topic Group in the Area of Play

Dana Levi, Amiya Waldman-Levi

Dana Levi, MSc, OT, Child Development Center, Clalit Healthcare Services Central District - Israel. itzikdana@013net.net

Corresponding author: **Amiya Waldman-Levi**, PhD, OT, formerly affiliated with the School of Occupational Therapy Hadassah and the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. amiyawl@gmail.com

This article is based on a project submitted by the first author for her graduate studies at the School of Occupational Therapy Hadassah and the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

Key Words: parents, supervision, group, play

Play is a primary and central area of occupation in children's lives that contributes to their development cognitively, emotionally, socially, motorically and linguistically. The environment plays a crucial role in children's development. Insofar as parents factor centrally in shaping their child's day-to-day environment, they have a significant impact on his/her play development. Studies show that children with developmental difficulties have deficits in the area of play as well. Occupational therapy interventions for young children focus on training parents to promote their child's development. A review of the literature reveals a lack of intervention programs for parents of children aged 1 to 3 with minor developmental difficulties, which relate to the promotion of play through parental guidance. This article describes an occupational therapy group-based intervention program developed for parents of 1 to 3 year-old children with minor developmental difficulties. The program was designed to provide such parents with both knowledge and skills in three dimensions of play: playfulness, play skills and play environment. The uniqueness of this program lies in its clinical rationale as well as its emphasis on significant aspects of how parents perceive their child's needs. The program is based on fundamental principles from the literature of group dynamics, in order

to promote the parents' personal goals. This article will expose occupational therapists to the use of play as a goal rather than as a therapeutic means.