
Editor's Notes: Special Issue on the Topic of Play - a Major and Significant Occupation

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Eleanor Schneider Amiya Waldman-Levi

*Play is an area of occupational performance that is of major importance in the lives of children and contributes not only to their ability to adapt but also to their general well-being. For adults, play constitutes an especially important aspect of the parenting role, as well as a leisure activity. In the professional literature, play is often seen as a means of relating to different aspects of a child's development (for example: emotional, cognitive, motor, language aspects), and as such has not been researched as an entity that stands on its own. In contrast, in occupational therapy, play is defined as a meaningful occupation, and as part of the spectrum of what we address in our professional work and clinical intervention. By virtue of its being an occupation, play incorporates aspects of both doing and of meaning. Both aspects of play have received much attention in the research conducted by occupational therapy researchers abroad, but in Israel research on play has only begun in recent years and the literature on the subject is scanty. For these reasons, we decided to take on the special challenge presented to us by **Dr. Racheli Kizony**, the editor-in-chief of IJOT.*

Both of us are students, researchers and teachers on the subject of play and see great importance in writing and disseminating information on play to the readers of IJOT.

We approached the task of editing a special issue on the topic of play imbued with faith and desire, but the path that awaited us was long and fraught with challenges and dilemmas. Many clinicians and researchers in Israel and around the world see the importance of play, and occupational therapy clinics provide an environment rich in a diverse variety of games. However, the general perspective on play is problematic in that it is usually seen only as a means of improving different performance components and skills. This perspective reflects a therapeutic paradigm that is accepted even today and results from the wealth of frames of reference in occupational therapy that had begun to be developed from the 1960's. As previously stated, the use of play is, for the most part, guided and structured by the therapist, and the emphasis is more on the doing aspect rather than on the meaning aspect. For these reasons, the articles in this issue were chosen with great care, to

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ensure that they incorporate relevant content and the application of critical thinking regarding content that is not based on "play as occupation".

A unique and important contribution to this special issue was provided by **Prof. Anita Bundy**, who responded to our request with a research article, "**Comparing the Effectiveness of a Parent Group Intervention with Child-Based Intervention for Promoting Playfulness in Children with Disabilities**" that describes the implementation of a group for parents on the subject of their children's difficulties with play. Prof. Bundy is the world's leading researcher in the study of playfulness, a central characteristic of play. She has published tens of articles and composed two major assessment tools designed for the evaluation of play. In the article, Prof. Bundy describes a parents' group that deals with the subject of play, as well as the findings of her qualitative research study regarding the experience of parents who participated in this unique intervention.

An additional contribution is that of **Dr. Eleanor Schneider**, an expert in the field of play, and **Prof. Anat Scher**, who share with us the results of their study on **Task-directed behavior and focused attention in infants' exploratory play**. This article follows the development of exploratory play that occurs during a short period in infancy and examines the characteristics and abilities of the child as well as the play environment. Hence, this article provides us with knowledge regarding a preliminary and important stage of play among typically developing infants and toddlers. The readers can utilize the vast knowledge provided and implement it in relevant clinical situations during their sessions with children who are in these stages of play.

Ms. Sarit Tresser, occupational therapist and founder of the Timocco Company, also responded to the challenge and wrote a case study that demonstrates the integration of a play-based intervention that also uses play as a means to achieve therapeutic outcomes. Her article reflects the clinical thinking that accompanies the occupational therapist while planning and implementing intervention in general, and specifically in the area of play: how to identify difficulties in the area of play and how to respond to them. Sarit presents the use of a virtual play environment in order to improve the child's means of coping with difficulties in the area of play. The changes are presented in a graphic manner and are analyzed methodically and critically.

This issue presents an expanded "**Technology**" column, thanks to the initiative and motivation of **Ms. Talia Farber** and her expertise on the virtual world in general and on computerized games specifically. Talia reviews the use of computer games as a means and not a goal. It is important to us to

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emphasize this essential distinction to the reader. However, we feel that an intelligent reading of the material presented in the article will enable clinicians to use computerized games as a means of overcoming the difficulties in the area of play as demonstrated by Ms. Sarit Tresser in her case study article.

In the "**Book Review**" column, **Ms. Amiya Waldman-Levi** - a researcher, writer and promoter of play as an integral part of the intervention process - reviews the new book by Miller-Kuhaneck, Spitzer and Miller, "**Activity analysis, creativity, and playfulness in pediatric occupational therapy: Making play just right**". Amiya presents a thorough review of the contents of the book as well as an in-depth and critical discussion of the contribution of the book to our area of knowledge on play. The pros and cons of the book are presented relative to its target audience. In addition, Amiya clarifies which areas of the book, in her professional opinion, are lacking information or are not related to sufficiently in-depth, and recommends additional sources of information. From the review one can understand that, notwithstanding a certain lack in theoretical content, the book can be utilized as a comprehensive, serious and practical resource for clinicians interested in using play and promoting play in the occupational therapy intervention process.

We hope that this special issue will arouse your curiosity to learn, investigate, and implement the use of play as a goal alongside its use as a means, and even to broaden its use to other clinical populations in the life cycle.

This issue, as mentioned previously, deals with the topic of play. Nevertheless, it includes a letter of congratulation written by **Dr. Naomi Hadas Lidor** to **Prof. Reuven Feuerstein**, in honor of his 90th birthday. Reading this letter commending the life's work of a creative man who believes in what he has developed, can be a source of inspiration to us all.

We have enjoyed our combined efforts and mutual inspiration and we would like to take this opportunity to invite occupational therapists to participate in the professional actions of IJOT by contributing to it through writing and critically appraising articles. It is the ethical, professional obligation of all of us.

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Guest editors

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