



Jenna's Therapy Room

JPA therapists use play to make children comfortable and encourage them to open up about what's on their minds. They enter the room to find a wide variety of toys, supplies, and objects they can choose on their own. As they play, the therapists engage them in conversation and help them process their hurts and anxieties. Here's a look at Jenna's room in a neighborhood school.

My therapy room is located right in the school my elementary-aged students attend so they quickly become familiar with it. It also lessens the idea that talking with me is somehow unusual or separate from their normal day. All the students see me as part of the school community, so those who come to see me for therapy don't have to feel like they're being singled out. I really feel like I've become interwoven into the school culture.

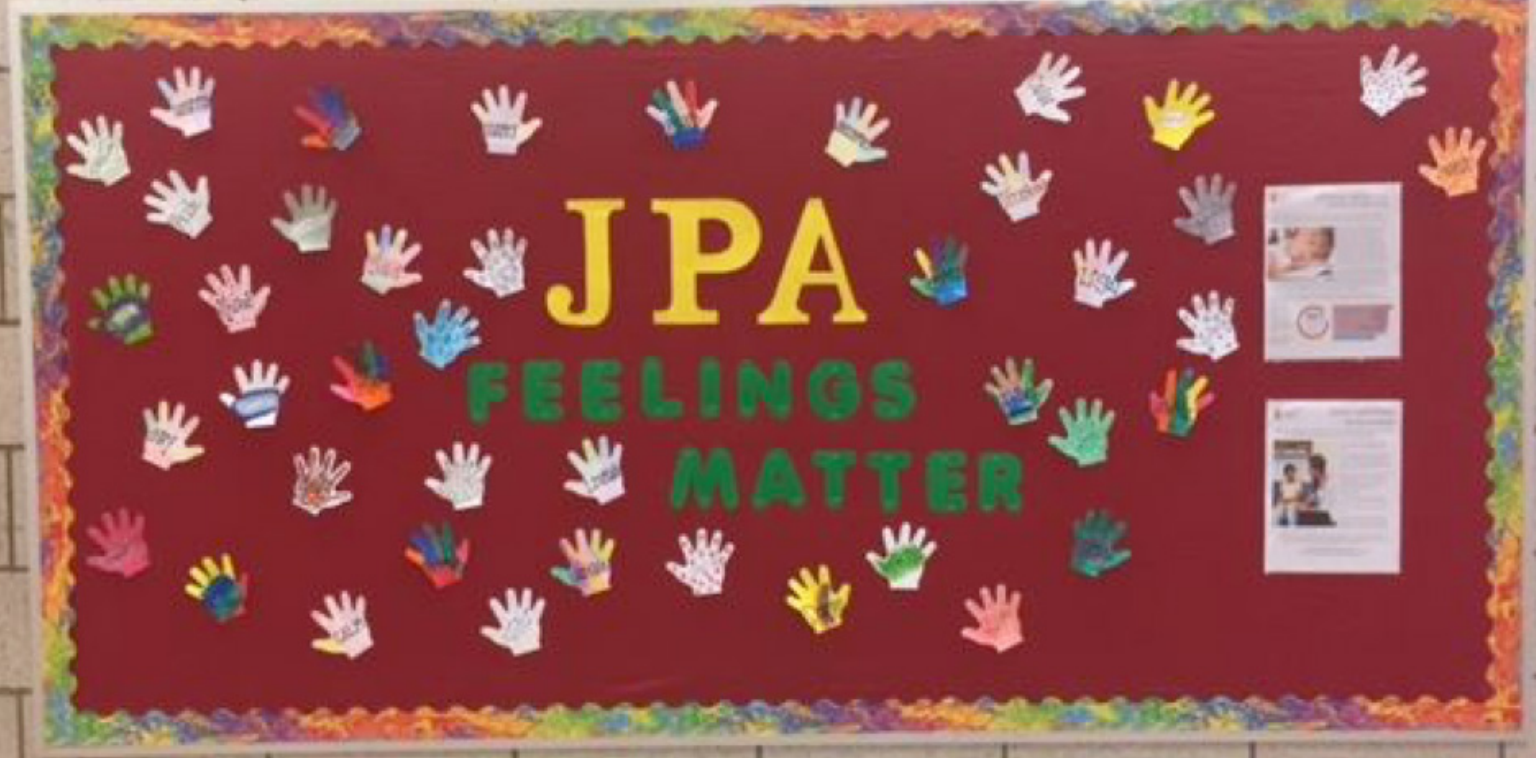
I've arranged it so all the toys and games are accessible to children. I keep toys geared towards younger children lower to the ground and within arm's reach. I keep the room clean and inviting, and at a comfortable temperature so it's as relaxing as possible.

Pops of color in my space bring in energy and invite children to feel active if they want. They're welcome to keep the overhead lights on or off during sessions depending on their mood. We also have big windows that let in a lot of natural light. It's a fairly large room, so they can move around or choose a favorite spot to play.

Playdoh and my sand-tray (like a miniature sandbox) are available on a main table. Many children will make scenes in the sand tray that tell me something about their lives and experiences. It's especially helpful to have the sand-tray when having sessions with younger students. They may not have the words to describe a traumatic experience they've had, but they can recreate it and express their feelings in the sand, giving me some insight into what they're feeling without directly talking about it.

You can see I also have a number of stuffed animals, which children often use as confidants. It's easier for them, especially when we first start to meet, to share feelings with a bear or a monkey than with another person. They often talk to it like they would to an old friend as they get to know me better. But once they're comfortable,





they may include me in the conversation or let me listen in on their important words.

What's important is that they can choose to play with whatever they want during their time with me. It's totally up to them, which gives them a feeling of confidence and control they may not feel in their daily lives. That enables them to tell their stories so I can help them heal.

I also have a table in the middle of my room where I can meet with parents. It's separate from my teacher's desk. At this table, we're on a level playing field. If I were to sit behind my

desk while we meet, this might have a feeling of a power differential. I want parents to view me as accessible and as their equal; someone they can talk to, and who won't talk down to them or just tell them what to do. It's important to hear everyone's thoughts and feelings. I think the room makes parents feel comfortable, and, they know their children can be safe and open here. **JPA**

