

Play Therapy for Childhood Trauma (continued)

Here's what happened with Kevin:

Initially, Kevin had difficulty verbalizing during therapy. He was hypervigilant and hyperactive. In the playroom, he began enacting violent scenes where he was a "good guy" but then transformed into a villain. For weeks, the therapist repeated this play sequence with Kevin -- he transformed from a kind and helpful police officer to a criminal who forced the bank teller (the therapist) to commit crimes in order to save her life. But slowly, Kevin's behavior adapted. The initial "aggressive stage" play warmed into "nurturing stage" play where the therapist was not a victim of gun violence each week, or was given lifesaving medical attention. He also began to change his own characters; he and the therapist together rescued others from villains with guns. Toward the end of his treatment, Kevin had fully transitioned into the "mastery stage" and could save the day himself with little to no involvement from the therapist. He took up other interests in the playroom such as basketball and board games, which helped him with focusing and determination.

Children communicate naturally through play. In CCPT, as children feel safe in the non-judgmental setting of the YWCA's Therapeutic Playroom, they begin to realize that the therapist will not react as others in their life typically react. When they use the playroom, they can engage in play that may replicate frightening or traumatic situations. They are able to gain the control to change outcomes in the play scenario - working their way toward resiliency.