

MY THERAPY HOUSE AND UNISA CO-THERAPY PROJECT


"Investigating the experience of Co-therapy in Early Childhood Intervention"

About Us:

We are two UniSA fourth-year Speech Pathology students who have been working with My Therapy House over the last five months to investigate co-therapy, it's benefits and limitations. We have thoroughly enjoyed getting to meet many of the My Therapy House families and listening to your stories.

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We thank you for your support in our project. Without you it would not have been possible. 

Rationale:

There is currently very little published literature about the impacts of co-therapy. However, the small amount of published work shows that co-therapy can promote positive client outcomes, help them reach their goals, and increase the quality of therapy and therapists. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that this outcome can be discovered in allied health too.

Our findings:

- With two therapists working together towards goals, children have been and are able to reach goals quicker
- **Parents/caregivers and staff both agreed that with co-therapy children are able to develop their skills and make more progress than with a single therapist**
- With both therapists the child is more regulated and/or can be better supported to regulate themselves. This contributes towards reaching their goals and progressing their skills.
- **Parents/caregivers and staff alike also agreed that a significant benefit of co-therapy is the therapist's ability to provide support to parents/caregivers. This is beneficial because it allows parents/caregivers to ask questions or seek advice without taking the focus of the session away from the child.**
- There is more opportunity for parent coaching so parents/caregivers can feel more confident in themselves and educated about their children so they can better support them at home.

Method:

- We conducted interviews with staff, parents, and caregivers from the My Therapy House community
- We read through all the responses to look for similarities and for any of your questions and/or concerns
- We observed sessions to see how two therapists work together with a client and their parent
- We wrote a report (available on request) and this handout based on our results

How you've helped:

Through your openness and honesty in interviews and allowing us to observe sessions, you gave us invaluable information that we used to complete our project. Our achievement wouldn't have been possible without your involvement.

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What is going well?

- Majority of families said that they feel comfortable and supported by therapy, their child's therapists, and the staff of My Therapy House.
- **You said** - "I feel very supported", "The extra support helps our [family]", "[therapy is] supportive in every way"
- Therapists help you understand your child and how you can help them at home
- **You said** - "they've helped me understand more about my child", "I tell [clinician] what I learn and [they] give me feedback [on] what I should do or try"
- Many families mentioned how with co-therapy their child is able to make progress towards their goals quicker and improve the skills focused on in sessions.
- **You said** - "I've noticed [their] confidence grow", "I can see a difference in [my child]"

What can be improved?

- Some families said they felt **confused** about what co-therapy is and why your child might benefit from it.
- Some families feel like it can be **overwhelming** focusing on two disciplines at once, and it's hard to know what to do at home as a parent/caregiver.

Your ongoing feedback is invaluable. Everybody's profile and learning styles are different. If you are feeling confused, overwhelmed or have any other questions or concerns about your child's therapy, we strongly encourage you to talk to the therapists about it, they are always there to listen, help and answer your questions!

Answering your questions...

How are two therapists able to work towards different goals?

The teamwork needed to provide co-therapy doesn't end when the session ends! Therapists collaborate on all aspects of your child's therapy, including planning sessions, addressing your concerns between sessions, preparing the rooms, documenting sessions as well as writing reports to make sure goals from both disciplines are addressed. Some sessions may appear to be focusing on one discipline more heavily, which can be due to many reasons, including the fact that your child may need support regulating before more play or communication activities can be delivered, or one therapist may have goals for that session focusing on the parent/caregiver.

Why is one therapist working with my child while the other is watching?

Although both therapists may not be playing with your child at the same time they are both working on your child's goals at the same time. Through watching, therapists are able to gather information about how your child is progressing with their goals, how they are responding to the current activities and adapt strategies in the moment. This way your child and you can get the most out of the session.

Why are there two different disciplines at once?

As co-therapy involves two therapists with different backgrounds working together at the same time, this provides an opportunity to focus on two areas that your child needs support in. Children develop regulation, attention, safety, interaction, communication, thinking and concentration skills through playing and moving within meaningful relationships. Therefore it is essential that two therapists work on the child's goals together so that all of this learning can take place in a safe and nurturing environment.