



SEPTEMBER 2012



Dear VAPT Playmates,
Labor Day means heading back to school! I feel a sense of renewal and a desire to learn something new this time of year! Many VAPT members will be heading to Cleveland next month to ignite their neurons & feel inspired at the international Association for Play Therapy conference.

Highlights will include:

- Networking & Learning new skills
- Incorporating technology into the playroom
- Keynote speaker Steve Gross on "How Joy & Optimism Ignite the Best in All of Us"

VAPT will also:

- Receive its well-deserved Gold Branch award

Oh, and don't forget meeting Elvis at the Rock n' Roll Hall of Fame!!



If you haven't done so already, visit www.a4pt.org to register: Early bird registration ends September 12th!



As the new school year approaches many children and teens will get butterflies in their stomach and some may demonstrate an increase in agitation & other behavioral concerns. For some kids there are meltdowns associated with the anxiety of a new school year. Here are some tips on how we can help families feel better prepared & ease these jitters:

- **BE PREPARED**

Help your child become familiar with the bus-stop, bus route, school building, and schedule. If the school offers an orientation, encourage them to attend and be present to answer questions

afterward. The week & night before choose the first day outfit, pack lunch or gather lunch money, help them pack their book-bag with the needed supplies, etc. These tangible preparations can help kids feel ready and get a good night sleep before the first day!

- **ENGAGE IN CONVERSATION ABOUT SCHOOL**

Talk with your kids about who their new teachers are, making sure to emphasize the positive. Also, be there to listen to disappointments to not having friends in their class, and don't forget to help them feel confident to meet new friends. Set aside time in the evening after each day of school to learn about their day. Some academic and social question prompts are:

Who did you meet today?

What subject did you like the most?

What do your friends like to do?

Who do you eat lunch with?

Are there classmates that they don't get along with?

Making this conversation a part of the daily routine will help your child feel they can come to you with both the good and the bad. It will help them to find solutions to their problems with and without you. One of my favorite childhood memories is a very busy mother taking the time to sit with me each afternoon with a cup of tea or snack and talk about the day.

- **SET A ROUTINE (EVEN BEFORE DAY 1)**

It is easy with the long days of summer to slip into late dinners and even later bedtimes. While that is part of the joy of summer, it is important to begin getting into the school routine a few weeks before school starts. Begin going to bed earlier each night with healthy bedtime hygiene. Help your child begin waking up to an alarm close to the time they will have to get up for school. Decide when during the school year activities of daily living will take place and begin to implement that schedule (i.e. shower the evening before, set out clothes, etc). This will make the night before and the first day of school smoother for both you and your child! It will also help with getting a good night's rest, which will all know is important.



- **TURN OFF TECHNOLOGY & TUNE IN TO EACH OTHER**

Spending quality time (related to academics and to fun) will help your child feel supported and that you are engaged not only with their learning, but in their lives. This doesn't necessarily require a lot of time (15 minutes here and there adds up), but it does require complete attention and disconnection from distracting technology (blackberries & ipads count). While these can be wonderful communication tools, the purpose of this time is for you and your child to connect on the most basic, human level, which is face to face. Talk with your children about what they are learning (in and out of school), become interested in their passions, tell them what you see and love about the world around you. LISTEN to your child's experience and delight in learning together. This will have a positive impact on their social-emotional development in addition to fostering their academic interest.

*Some information gathered from: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/craig-a-mertler/backtoschool-preparations_b_1734951.html & <http://suite101.com/article/calming-back-to-school-nerve-a63862>

* A good article with tips directed to youth: <http://wvgazette.com/Entertainment/FlipSide/201108170968>

2. BACK-TO-SCHOOL Themes in the Playroom



You may notice as the new school year approaches more children will incorporate themes of school into their play in your office/playroom. Be cognizant of what these themes reveal and what children may be working through. Also, make sure you have toys available to re-create the school experience (a mini or life size desk and chalkboard, playschool figures, composition notebooks, etc). These are inexpensive, yet valuable additions to any playroom.

3. SAVE THE DATE

WINTER WORKSHOP

Friday, January 25, 2013

Richmond, VA

Keep your eye out for presenter announcement & registration details!

4. PLAY is a KEY to LEARNING *for children and adults alike.*

This brief article outlines how beneficial play is for our minds and bodies at all ages. Notice the fun ideas for incorporating play at work.

http://www.helpguide.org/life/creative_play_fun_games.htm



Make play a priority in you and your child's life.

Just because summer is over, it doesn't mean playtime is over. Autumn weather lends itself to outdoor adventure and play; take a hike or bike ride at a local park, camp out in the backyard, put together a pick up soccer or football game, go to a pumpkin patch, plant a late summer/fall garden (lettuces, snap peas, beans, squash, pumpkins, and gourds do well in the cooler temps).

As a reminder, here are just a few of the educational benefits of play:

- providing a meaningful context for children to learn concepts and skills;
- making learning fun and enjoyable;
- encouraging children to explore and discover together and on their own;
- allowing children to extend what they are learning;
- encouraging children to experiment and take risks;
- providing opportunities for collaborative learning with adults and peers;
- allowing for the practice of skills.

<http://udel.edu/~roberta/play/benefits.html>

5. VAPT Chapter News

The chapters are becoming play therapy hubs around the state. Some are offering continuing education credit with their monthly meetings. Below is a list of our VAPT Chapter areas and their Chapter Chairperson. If you have not heard from your Chapter Chair, feel free to send them an email and let them know if you can help start a series of meetings for child and family therapists in your area.

Roanoke VAPT Chairperson Stephanie Pratola
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Playfully,

Katie Masey

Rockbridge Chapter Chair