



Keynote Presentation Title:

The Way of Play: Strengthening the Role of Play with Children and Their Caregivers to Build Relationships and Resilience Through Adversity

Format: 90 minute keynote presentation

Engaging Description

In their new book, *The Way of Play* (co-written with Dr. Tina Payne Bryson, NY Times bestselling author of *The Whole-Brain Child*), renowned play therapist Dr. Georgie Wisen-Vincent, PhD, LMFT, RPT-S, ECMHS presents the latest scientific research with a special emphasis on children's relationships, the power of play, and the developing brain.

In this groundbreaking session Georgie equips you with easy and practical play strategies for families inspired by neuroscience and play therapy to support parents and children dealing with stress, dysregulation, and at times, emotional chaos and conflict.

Join Georgie for a deep dive into specific skills for strengthening parents'/ caregivers' and children's interpersonal interactions aimed at building brain development and stress resilience.

In a way that's clear, interesting, and immediately useful for home visitors, parent coaches, early educators, caregivers, and other service providers, Georgie will present a set of research-validated, play-based strategies she and her team at the Play Strong Institute developed to better address the stress-related outcomes of developmental differences and trauma, including challenging symptoms and behaviors, emotional dysregulation, and difficulty with relationships.

You'll learn:

- How connection and play can address adversity, change behaviors, and boost development.
- Therapeutic play strategies that support a child's (and their family and caregiving system's) adaptive functioning.
- How to follow innovative steps of playing within children's personal narratives to help them deal more effectively with challenges in the future.

Through heart-warming stories, video clips, and engaging demonstrations, Georgie will show you how the PlayStrong approach invites children to explore and interact in play alongside their caregivers and supportive staff to improve behavior, create secure bonds, and boost stress recovery and resilience.

Learning Objectives

1. Identify 2 signs and symptoms of child behavioral challenges in play-based situations.
2. Describe 3 changes in child functioning that can occur within a supportive play interaction.
3. Recognize 3 therapeutic play strategies to engage children around adversity-related themes.

4. Integrate 2 play-based activities to develop child emotional regulation.
5. Describe 2 play-based activities that enhance adults' responsiveness to children's challenging behaviors.
6. Formulate 3 goals to advance child emotional resilience and developmental growth using play-based techniques.

Outline

Defining Play, the Play Strong Approach, and Supporting Development in Play

Defining Play

The Play Strong Approach

What is Attachment (How Relationships Shape Development)

What is Interpersonal Neurobiology (How Play Changes the Brain)

How Play Can Address Behaviors

Assessment: Caregiver-Child/Interventionist-Child/ Caregiver-Interventionist

Why Engage Differently in Play

Beyond Engagement: Caregivers (and Other Adults) as Play Partners

Beyond Play: Caregivers as Therapeutic Play Agents

Review of Efficacy Studies

Specific Techniques and Application of Play Strong Strategies

Think Out Loud (Mentalization of Self-Other)

Make Yourself a Mirror (Attunement and Empathy)

Bring Emotions to Life (Emotional Awareness)

Dial Intensity Up or Down (Sensory and Emotion Regulation)

Set Playtime Parameters (Behavioral Flexibility)

Scaffold and Stretch (Executive Skills and Resilience)

Narrate to Integrate (Trauma Narrative Re-Integration)

Tracking and Evaluating Change

Breakout Presentation Title:

Trauma Responsive Play: Bringing the Strategies to Your Work or Practice

Format: 75 minute breakout workshop

Engaging Description

When children experience trauma, their brains adapt in ways meant to protect them in the moment, but these adaptations can have lasting consequences. The same is true for parents who endured childhood adversity. Key areas of the brain may now function differently, influencing how a parent understands and processes emotions, the degree of safety and security they can offer their children, and their ability to reflect and respond calmly to their children's behavior. Their stress-response system has been sensitized to chaos and conflict in their own upbringing, leaving them vulnerable to their own children's dysregulated states.

In this highly engaging breakout session, participants will have a chance to interactively practice play-based strategies useful in working from a neurobiological, trauma-informed framework. This training is meant for those who would apply play-based skills specifically to caring and supporting traumatized children. We will cover necessary materials and space to engage children and caregivers, how to playfully establish safety and rapport, and facilitating trauma recovery play, a shift toward calming emotions that will change the way families approach challenges and bring them closer for years to come.

Learning Objectives

1. Identify 3 methods outlined in trauma-informed play therapy to assist children in problem-solving and hopeful solution formation toward trauma recovery.
2. Explain 5 trauma-informed play therapy strategies toward building the child's relationship and communication skills with the supportive presence of an adult.
3. Demonstrate 3 improved play-based skills to increase the child's capacities for emotion regulation and caregiver-child co-regulation.

Lead Instructor/Developer Bio



Dr. Georgie Wisen-Vincent, PhD, LMFT, RPT-S, ECMHS is a nationally recognized play therapy expert and co-author (with Dr. Tina Payne Bryson) of the new book -- THE WAY OF PLAY (Penguin Random House, January 2025).

Georgie is the Founder/Director of The Play Strong Institute, a center devoted to the study, research, and practice of play therapy through a neurodevelopment lens, along with Dr. Bryson, the Founder/Executive Director of The Center for Connection, a multidisciplinary clinical practice in Southern California. Georgie is also a child, adolescent, and family psychotherapist and maintains a private practice at The Center for Connection.

The Play Strong Institute offers the Certificate in Play Therapy with a Neurorelational Emphasis, an educational pathway toward becoming a credentialed play therapist. Through the Institute, the Play Strong approach was developed using child-led, adult scaffolded connection and play to

help parents, therapists, educators, and care providers augment intervention aimed at the social, emotional, developmental, and learning needs of children from infancy to early adolescence. Play Strong Parenting (a component of Neurofilial Therapy) has been validated by empirical research and is currently being studied with non-parental caregivers and early childhood educators, among other research investigations currently underway.

Neurofilial Therapy (NFT) is a more recent expansion on the well-established research behind Filial Therapy, a model that nurtures the parent-child relationship and places parents and caregivers in the role of therapeutic changemaker for their children. Georgie has gathered an advisory group of clinicians, knowledgeable in dyadic practice, to further develop the model and advance training in family therapy informed by Interpersonal Neurobiology (IPNB).

A graduate professor at Santa Clara University and active researcher in childhood play, attachment science, and mental health, Georgie has been commissioned as a consultant, program designer, and lead trainer for several major organizations and frequently presents to educators, parents, and clinical professionals on play therapy, trauma resilience, and the power of play-driven learning. She completed advanced study in play therapy at the University of Roehampton, London. Georgie gained specialist endorsement in early childhood mental health after completing the UC Davis Napa Infant Mental Health Fellowship. She has recently completed her doctoral program, a PhD in Infant and Early Child Development, focused on neurodiversity and parent-child attachment relationships.

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