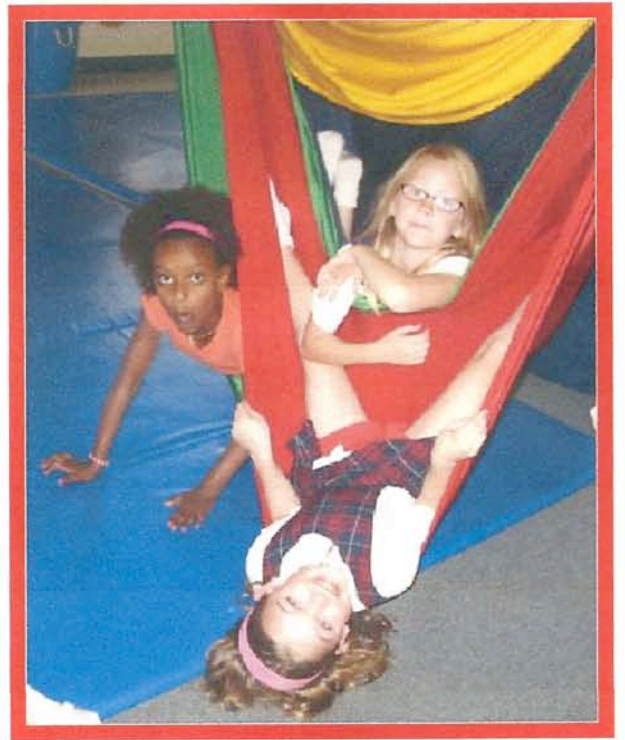


Pathways to Play!

The DPK Model



The DPK model combines Sensory Integration (SI) and Integrated Playgroups (IPG) to facilitate peer play for children with sensory processing difficulties.

Sensory integration is the organizing and processing of sensory information from different sensory channels and the ability to make an adaptive response. Sensory Integration therapy was initially developed through the pioneering work of Jean Ayres, PhD., OTR. She believed that sensory integration occurred primarily in early play experiences. She described sensory integration developmentally and said that the child organized behavior through successful adaptive responses. Many children with sensory processing disorder are treated with a program of OT or PT conducted in a sensory-rich environment. SI therapy helps these children to manage their responses to

sensations and to behave in a more functional manner. Therapy enables them to take part in the normal activities of childhood, such as playing with friends, enjoying school, eating, dressing, and sleeping.

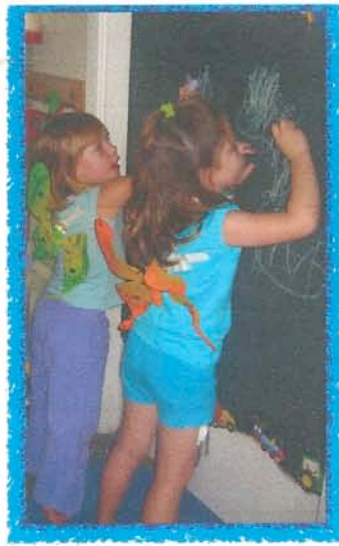
The IPG model was created by Pamela Wolfberg, PhD, out of deep concern for the many children who are missing out on peer play experiences as a vital part of childhood. Drawing on current theory, research and practice, the IPG model is designed to support children of diverse ages and abilities on the autism spectrum (novice players) in play with typical peers/siblings (expert players) in home, school and community settings. Children meet regularly in small groups led by a qualified adult facilitator (play guide). Each group is customized as a part of a child's individual education therapy program. Through a carefully tailored system of support, emphasis is placed on maximizing children's developmental potential as well as intrinsic desire to play, socialize and form meaningful relationships with

peers. An equally important focus is on teaching the peer group to be responsive, accepting and inclusive of children who relate and play in different ways.

At DPK, we have successfully used this combined model during regularly scheduled therapy sessions. Our treatment approach utilizes methods of sensory integration therapy (vestibular, tactile, proprioceptive, visual, auditory, gustatory and olfactory input) and provides building blocks for functional skills. The therapist then designs a play sessions to incorporate sensory strategies that will best support the self regulation and modulation of the novice player. The supportive, structured external environment allows the novice to begin to organize internally and move to an optimal learning state. Skills are not taught but allowed to emerge spontaneously as skills develop. Therefore, play is an adaptive response the just right challenge!



Developmental Pathways for Kids is a partnership of professionals committed to optimal developmental, social and emotional outcomes for atypically developing infants and children and their families.



The Essence of Play

It wasn't so long ago when Ben spent the bulk of a birthday party alone and unhappy. While other kids laughed, played, and gobbled up cake, he sat in a corner sucking his thumb, just waiting for the time when he could walk back out the door. Experiences at local playgrounds weren't much better. Ben would reluctantly play on the monkey bars or slides. But he'd only do that when no one else was using them. In fact, his most successful moments at a park were when he had it all to himself. For Ben's parents, the scenes were heartbreaking. "I remember wondering if I'd ever get the chance to watch my son happily playing with another child," recalls Ben's mother, Linda. "Would he ever dream up imaginary games or participate in a friendly game of kick ball?"

The answer to all those questions, thankfully turned out to be 'yes'. Just before his third birthday, Ben began to participate in an innovative program at Developmental Pathways for Kids in Redwood City, California.

The therapy offers children with a combination of social and sensory difficulties a natural and supportive environment in which to make friends and learn the fine art of play.

That's why the approach at Developmental Pathways makes so much sense

The first 30 minutes of a one-hour session are spent addressing a child's sensory needs. The second half-hour of a therapy session pairs a kids like Ben, dubbed a novice player, with two typically developing peers, so-called experts in a fun play experience called an Integrated Play Group (IPG).

Eventually, the goal is that the group takes on it's own life—each child is an independent participant in the group and most sessions can be driven exclusively by the kids. This flexibility allows for the most natural play scenarios and gives novice players consistent opportunities to build play repertoires and make successful social interactions. And it is fun! Laughter and smiles combined with determination and engagement in the play scenario are evidence that each child is participating in a worthwhile experience.

As for Ben, he is now six years old. He attends first grade at a mainstream public school in his community. He has several friends, plays on his local baseball team, and has graduated from local playgrounds to full-fledged amusement parks. As for birthday parties, Ben now looks forward to each and every one of them – especially his own.

Core Elements of Sensory Integration

- Provide a "just right" challenge
- Play context
- Support optimal arousal
- Provide an engaging environment
- Allow for child directed activities
- Create opportunities for a variety of sensory experiences
- Maximize a child's success

Core Elements of Integrated Playgroups

- Mutually enjoyed play experience
- Experts and novices
- Highly motivating activities
- Small groups
- Trained adult facilitator
- Guided participation

Play becomes a balanced partnership when sensory integration and integrated playgroups are combined!

Our clinic environment was designed to be comfortable and stress-free, yet filled with excitement, inspiration and fun, which supports positive emotions and encourages learning.

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