



The Children's Apperception Test for Assessment and Treatment Planning

The Children's Apperception Test (CAT-A), developed by Leopold Bellak and Sonya Sorel Bellak in 1949, is a very well known projective assessment tool in which clinicians ask children, ages 3 and up, to tell a story in response to pictures. The CAT informs play therapy theory and practice as interpretation of CAT stories utilizes the same process of interpretation of symbolic meaning used in interpreting the meaning of children's imaginative play. In both, we gain insight into the nature of children's needs, attention deficit, depression, anxieties, conflicts, ego functions, superego functions, defensive responses, self-concept, internal representational models, and object relationships. The CAT offers standardized stimuli (stories) that allow for comparison of a child's stories to normative stories, yielding insights that may not be observable in unstructured play. The CAT-A color (2012) and CAT-H color (2017) editions are available for this course.

(In the state of California, marriage and family therapists are permitted within their scope of practice, to use psychological tests such as the CAT, with proper training, for assessment of clients whom they treat (though not for psychological assessment outside of treatment).

Related Certificate Programs: Play Therapy

Play Therapy, Art Therapy, and Assessment of Abused Children and Adolescents

This is a course in the treatment of abuse, emphasizing child physical and sexual abuse, and including witnessing domestic violence and traumatic illness or injury to self and loved ones. A treatment model is provided, including a theoretical framework for the effects of trauma on children and adolescents, a review of specialized assessment tools, and adaptive resolutions of trauma. This model is applied to an array of treatment tools, including play therapy, art therapy, psychodrama, writing, story-telling, cognitive-behavioral interventions, and trauma-focused work.

1. Story-telling Tests: Children's Apperception Test (CAT-A) using animal forms (best for age 3-10) and CAT H using human forms (best for ages 10-14)

a. Similarities to play observation; both assess:

- 1.) Sense of self
- 2.) Object relationships
- 3.) Nature of conflicts and anxieties, and the capacity to resolve conflict
- 4.) Ego strength
- 5.) Defensive structure
- 6.) Superego structure and identificatory processes

7.) Drive-taming (constructive vs. modulated vs. destructive aggression)

b. Advantages of CAT over play observation:

- 1.) More uniform presenting stimulus
- 2.) Larger body of research on normative responses
- 3.) The CAT provides both the color and black and white versions which will both as a comparison are being researched to demonstrate the differences in story-telling. Many patients prefer the color versions as evidenced by the sales of the CAT in color.