



BRIDGES TO THE CHILD
International Play Therapy Conference

International Play Therapy Conference

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3 days – 3 themes – one shared language: play that heals

Program



June 10 – 12, 2026



INVITATION TO THE INTERNATIONAL PLAY THERAPY CONFERENCE

It is with great pleasure that we invite you to take part in a unique event bringing together specialists, practitioners, and students working with children — the International Play Therapy Conference.

This conference was created for those who wish to deepen their professional competencies, draw inspiration from the experiences of others, and develop their practice grounded in a deep understanding of the child's needs. It offers three days filled with inspiration, practical knowledge, professional exchange, and meaningful encounters that have the power to transform the way we work with children and understand their development.

The conference theme — “Bridges to the Child” — reflects our shared commitment to building safe, authentic relationships with children, regardless of their experiences or challenges, including neurodiversity, anxiety, perfectionism, emotional withdrawal, or emotional difficulties. We believe that play is a universal language, one through which we can truly reach children at the deepest level.

We are especially honoured to welcome Dr. Heidi G. Kaduson, one of the most distinguished figures in contemporary Play Therapy. Her presence as our special guest is a great honour for us.

We warmly invite all those who wish to grow professionally, strengthen their therapeutic competencies, and build new “bridges” leading to a deeper understanding of the child. Join us in creating a space where play becomes a pathway to healing, connection, and growth.

You can **attend the conference on-site in Brno, Czech Republic or ONLINE**, the event available to practitioners across multiple countries.

Together, let us build bridges to the child.



Zuzana Dubeková
Chair of SCAPT

Joanna Babińska
Chair of PTTZ

WHO WE ARE – PTTZ & SCAPT

The Polish Association for Play Therapy (PTTZ) and The Slovak – Czech Play Therapy Association (SCAPT) share a common vision for the development of play therapy as a developmentally appropriate psychotherapeutic method, grounded in relationships, ethics, and high clinical standards.

Both organizations work for the benefit of children, adolescents, and families in Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, supporting psychotherapeutic practice across diverse professional settings – private practices, mental health clinics, therapeutic centers, educational and medical institutions, as well as support and care organizations.

PTTZ and SCAPT are members of the International Consortium of Play Therapy Associations (ICPTA), which confirms their commitment to international standards of ethics, quality of training, and responsible psychotherapeutic practice.

The activities of PTTZ and SCAPT include:

- setting and promoting high standards of psychotherapeutic practice,
- creating opportunities for professional development through training, conferences, and supervision,
- supporting scientific research and international exchange of knowledge and experience,
- building a professional community of specialists working within a child-oriented approach,
- cooperating with national and international organizations,
- working to promote children's emotional well-being and the professional development of therapists.



Membership

Membership in PTTZ and SCAPT signifies readiness to work in accordance with ethical principles, clinical responsibility, and the idea of continuous learning and reflection on one's own practice.

We invite professionals who wish to practice or further develop play-based psychotherapy as a developmentally appropriate method, in safe and diverse settings, to join us in co-creating the future of play therapy in Central Europe.

Conference Synopsis – BRIDGES TO THE CHILD



Bridges to the Child International Play Therapy Conference brings together three days of keynote lectures, clinical discussions, and poster presentations designed to deepen, strengthen, and inspire the practice of Play Therapy across Central Europe and beyond.

Since Play is the language of the child, this conference aims to expand participants' knowledge, skills, and therapeutic creativity in their work with children and families.

We are honored to welcome **Dr. Heidi G. Kaduson**, one of the world's leading Play Therapy specialists, whose teaching, case work, and clinical wisdom have shaped generations of practitioners internationally for over 30 years.

Her three keynote days provide a unique opportunity to learn directly from a highly respected clinician, researcher, author, and supervisor in the field of prescriptive eclectic Play Therapy, which integrates theory and techniques tailored to each child.

This year's conference focuses on building bridges — between therapists and children, between challenges and growth, and between cultures and clinical perspectives.

Through the three conference themes, we will explore the therapeutic powers of play in supporting:

- neurodivergent children and their diverse developmental pathways,
- children and adolescents with low readiness to engage, navigating resistance, avoidance, or relational withdrawal,
- children experiencing anxiety, excessive worry, or perfectionism, whose inner pressures often remain unseen.

In addition to the core programme, the conference includes opportunities for professional networking, dialogue across national associations (SCAPT, PTTZ), and the presentation of posters showcasing clinical practice, research, and innovation in Play Therapy.

A conference award will be given for the most impactful poster. **Various participation options are offered, including on-site attendance in Brno and fully translated into polish online access, making the event available to practitioners across multiple countries.**





Learning Outcomes



Participants will have the opportunity to:

- broaden their understanding of different types of Play Therapy across cultural and international contexts,
- deepen their clinical skills in working with neurodivergent children through a Play Therapy framework,
- strengthen therapeutic approaches for children presenting resistance, avoidance, or relational withdrawal,
- enhance their capacity to support children experiencing anxiety, worry, and perfectionism using symbolic and non-symbolic play,
- enrich their reflective practice through exposure to clinical material, case discussions, and peer dialogue,
- gain meaningful professional development,
- experience the value of community — connecting, playing, sharing, and learning alongside passionate professionals dedicated to helping children through the healing power of play.



DAY 1 SYNOPSIS



Bridges to Neurodivergent Children

— Working with ASD, ADHD/ADD, and developmental differences through Play Therapy.

This full-day keynote workshop explores therapeutic practices designed to support neurodivergent children whose sensory, cognitive, emotional, and relational experiences may differ from those of neurotypical children. Although Play Therapy is uniquely suited to meet the needs of children who naturally communicate through play and self-directed exploration, many practitioners seek clearer frameworks for adapting interventions to diverse neurodevelopmental profiles.

On this day, attendees will learn to attune to the child's individual rhythm, regulate sensory and emotional arousal through playful interactions, and use the therapeutic powers of play and follow the child's lead for a central bridge to communication, connection, and growth.

Dr. Kaduson will integrate theory, case illustrations, and clinical demonstrations to help practitioners enhance their confidence and creativity when working with neurodivergent children. The clinicians will leave with techniques to use immediately upon returning to their clients.



Key Learning Objectives

- Identify neurodevelopmental differences relevant to Play Therapy practice.
- Explore child-led and therapist-supported strategies that facilitate communication and emotional expression.
- Learn to balance stimulation, structure, and attunement to foster safety and connection.
- Understand how Play Therapy can support developmental progress and build resilience in neurodivergent children.

DAY 2 SYNOPSIS



Bridges to Children and Adolescents with Low Readiness to Engage

— Working with avoidance, resistance, withdrawal, and relational defence.

Many children and adolescents enter therapy not by choice, but because adults have concerns about their behaviour, emotions, or functioning. For these young people, entering a therapeutic relationship may evoke uncertainty, anger, shame, fear, or withdrawal. This day focuses on how Play Therapy offers a uniquely effective pathway to connection when verbal approaches fall short. The value of playfulness will be emphasized.

Dr. Kaduson will guide participants through relational and playful strategies to reduce tension, build trust, and support gradual readiness for involvement in therapy. Through case material and reflection, attendees will explore understanding resistance as communication, attuning to protective behaviours, and using playful structure to create a safe, respectful climate that invites authentic engagement.



Key Learning Objectives

- Participants will learn child-friendly techniques to engage hard-to-reach children and adolescents
- Participants will learn play therapy strategies for making meaningful connections with distant and disconnected children.
- Learn playful interventions that support relational attunement in the presence of resistance.
- Understand how to interpret defensive behaviours within a developmental and emotional framework.
- Explore ways to establish safety, predictability, and agency in the therapeutic space.
- Enhance therapeutic confidence when working with highly defended, withdrawn, or reluctant children and adolescents.

DAY 3 SYNOPSIS



Bridges to Children Experiencing Anxiety, Worry, and Perfectionism

— Using play to reduce pressure and restore emotional flexibility.

Increasing numbers of children struggle with anxiety, excessive worry, performance pressure, and perfectionistic tendencies that restrict their capacity for play, creativity, and emotional freedom. The therapeutic powers of play are the change agents in Play Therapy. This day focuses on the application of Play Therapy to help children conquer fears, explore inner experiences safely, and reclaim a sense of control. Play and laughter will be emphasized as they reduce a child's anxiety.

Through demonstrations, clinical examples, and practical techniques, Dr. Kaduson will show how play can restore emotional elasticity, challenge rigid internal expectations, and foster coping skills. Participants will learn how play supports distress tolerance, self-soothing, and mastery within a developmentally attuned, non-judgmental relationship.



Key Learning Objectives

- Understand perfectionism and anxiety within developmental, relational, and neurobiological frameworks.
- Explore playful strategies that promote flexibility, bravery, and self-compassion.
- Develop tools to help children regain a sense of competence and internal safety.

Conference Schedule **Wednesday, Thursday, Friday**

WEDNESDAY 10 June 2026

DAY 1 – BRIDGES TO NEURODIVERGENT CHILDREN (ASD, ADHD, ADD).

The first day of the conference is dedicated to neurodivergent children, who bring into the therapeutic process their unique ways of perceiving, experiencing, and interpreting the world.

Time	Title	Presenters
8.50 - 9.00 am	Welcome to PTTZ and SCAPT Conference	
9.00 - 10.30 am	Keynote Speech: Play Therapy with Neurodivergent Children: What do we Know, What do we Need, What do we Learn and How Can we Help	Dr. Heidi Kaduson
10.30 - 11.00 am	* Coffee/Tea Break	
11.00 - 12.30 pm	Keynote Speech: The Therapeutic Powers of Play – Part 1 (with experiential)	Dr. Heidi Kaduson
12.30 - 2.00 pm	* * Lunch	
2.00 - 3.30 pm	Keynote Speech: The Therapeutic Powers of Play – Part 2 (with experiential)	Dr. Heidi Kaduson
3.30 - 4.00 pm	Coffee/Tea Break	
4.00 - 5.30 pm	PTTZ and SCAPT challenges and vision	
6.30 - 10.00 pm	* * * Networking dinner	By booking only

* The coffee/tea break is included in the ticket price .** Lunch is not included in the ticket price. Participants pay for lunch themselves. *** The networking dinner is ticketed, which you can purchase when registering for the conference.

THURSDAY 11 June 2026



DAY 2 — BRIDGES TO CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITH LOW READINESS TO ENGAGE (resistance, avoidance, withdrawal, anger, difficulties with engagement)

Time	Title	Presenters
8.50 - 9.00 am	Welcome to second day of the conference/reflection	Zuzana Dubeková (SCAPT Chair)
9.00 - 10.30 am	Keynote Speech: Play Therapy with Resistant Children and Adolescents: How to Engage Them and Use Play Therapy to Facilitate their Healing.	Dr. Heidi Kaduson
10.30 - 11.00 am	Coffee/Tea Break	
11.00 - 12.30 pm	Keynote Speech: Techniques Promoting Connection through Fun, Laughter and Play	Dr. Heidi Kaduson
12.30 - 2.00 pm	Lunch	
2.00 - 3.30 pm	Keynote Speech: The Importance of Training and Supervision for the Clinician with all populations	Dr. Heidi Kaduson
3.30 - 4.00 pm	Coffee/Tea Break	
4.00 - 5.00 pm	Members meeting PTTZ and SCAPT	

FRIDAY 12 June 2026

DAY 3 — BRIDGES TO CHILDREN EXPERIENCING ANXIETY, WORRY, AND PERFECTIONISM (generalized anxiety, tension, self-imposed demands, social fears)

The third day focuses on children who function under the pressure of anxiety, heightened expectations of themselves, perfectionism, or persistent emotional tension.

Time	Title	Presenters
8.50 - 9.00 am	Welcome to third day of the conference/reflection	Joanna Babińska (PTTZ Chair)
9.00 - 10.30 am	Keynote Speech: Play Based Interventions for Childhood Anxieties, Fears and Perfectionism	Dr. Heidi Kaduson
10.30 - 11.00 am	Coffee/Tea Break	
11.00- 12.30 pm	Keynote Speech: Developmental Issues and Solutions for Developmentally Appropriate Fears	Dr. Heidi Kaduson
12.30 - 2.00 pm	Lunch	
2.00 - 3.30 pm	Keynote Speech: What is So Perfect about Being Perfect?	Dr. Heidi Kaduson
3.30 - 4.00 pm	Closing reflection/posters review	

MEET THE SPEAKER

Biography of Dr. Heidi Gerard Kaduson

Dr. Heidi Gerard Kaduson is a licensed clinical child psychologist in New York and New Jersey and one of the world's leading experts in Play Therapy. She received her Ph.D. from Fairleigh Dickinson University and is currently completing a master's degree in Psychopharmacology for Prescribing Psychologists.

Dr. Kaduson specialises in the assessment and treatment of children with behavioural, emotional, developmental, and learning difficulties. She integrates Play Therapy in her work with individuals, groups, and social-skills training, and has trained or supervised thousands of professionals worldwide.

She has presented internationally on Play Therapy, ADHD, autism spectrum conditions, and learning disabilities.

Dr. Kaduson is the Director of The Play Therapy Training Institute, and is a past-President and former Board Member of the U.S. Association for Play Therapy.

Dr. Kaduson is the editor or author of numerous influential books in the field, including: *The Quotable Play Therapist; The Playing Cure; Game Play Therapy; Short-Term Play Therapy* (1st, 2nd, and upcoming 3rd editions); *Contemporary Play Therapy; Prescriptive Play Therapy: Tailoring Interventions for Specific Childhood Problems, Foundations of Play Therapy* (2nd ed.), *Release Play Therapy Interventions for Children Who Experienced Stressful Life Events, Play Therapy Across the Lifespan, Play Therapy with Children: Modalities for Change*; the bestselling *101 Favorite Play Therapy Techniques* (Volumes I, II, and III).

She has created a CEU DVD series on Play Therapy with children with ADHD. She is currently working on new publications, including *Individual and Play Therapy Approaches with Traumatized Children* and *Play Therapy*. Her latest book, entitled *Play Therapy with Siblings*, is presently in press.

Dr. Kaduson maintains a private practice in Plainsboro, New Jersey, where she continues her clinical work with children and families.



Dr. Heidi Gerard Kaduson



Poster Submissions



We warmly invite Play Therapists, psychologists, counsellors, educators, students, and all professionals using Play Therapy in their work with children to submit a poster for the conference exhibition. As a young professional community, we especially welcome posters that highlight practical applications of Play Therapy.

Submissions do not need to be formal research. We encourage contributions that reflect the richness and diversity of therapeutic work.

Posters may include

- Play Therapy case studies,
- clinical reflections or vignettes,
- examples of Play Therapy techniques or interventions,
- programme or practice development using Play Therapy,
- innovative approaches within a Play Therapy framework,
- early-stage research or exploratory Play Therapy projects,
- theory-to-practice applications of Play Therapy concepts,
- work related to any of the three conference themes.

All posters must be connected to Play Therapy practice, training, theory, or research.

Submission Deadline: 31 March 2026

Notification of Acceptance: By 30 April 2026

All accepted posters will be displayed during the conference. A Prize for Best Poster will be awarded at the closing session on Friday. Detailed poster formatting and submission guidance will be available on the conference website.





Conference Booking



Please book in advance to secure your place as the number of participants is limited.

Registration for in-person participation – Brno, Czech Republic

<https://www.inviton.eu/e-20367/medzinarodna-konferencia-terapie-hrou-mosty-k-dietatu>

Registration for ONLINE participation

<https://konferencja-terapii-zabawa-mosty-do-dzieci-online.sf-conference.com/>

Stationary participation, Brno, Czech Republic	Payment Deadline (Early Bird) 15 March 2026	Regular price
Full Package (3 days) *member of PTTZ/SCAPT	250 Euro	300 Euro
Full Package (3 days) *non-members	290 Euro	350 Euro
Networking dinner	30 Euro	30 Euro
Online Conference	Early Bird deadline March 15, 2026	Regular price
Full Package (3 days) *PTTZ member	600 PLN	850 PLN
Full Package (3 days) *persons who are not members of PTTZ	850 PLN	990 PLN
One-day participation *PTTZ member	250 PLN	320 PLN
One-day participation *persons who are not members of PTTZ	300 PLN	370 PLN



Conference Location



CZECH INN HOTEL Cosmopolitan Bobycentrum



Sportovní 559/2A, 602 00 Brno-Královo Pole, Czechia



Accommodation

Accommodation is also possible at the Czech Inn Hotel or other hotels in Brno. Conference participants are responsible for their own accommodation and meals - especially breakfast, lunch and dinner.



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