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For Some, Playing in the Sandbox Is a Serious Matter

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Even as increasing numbers of people log on to computers to create alternative lives or relive experiences through avatars, some kids and adults still use an age-old medium to express themselves: the sandbox. "Sandplay" is used by a growing number of psychotherapists working with clients who have trouble expressing themselves verbally. These clients range from U.S. troops who have served in Iraq to children who have survived such traumas as war or sexual abuse.



(By Dang Yun -- Chinafotopress)

As in this scene from Lanzhou, China, the therapist usually looks on while the client picks model animals, trees, people and furniture and sets them up in a sandbox. The client can then use the figures to create a miniature version of his or her world.

"What's too painful or complicated to say with words, play makes easier," says Sonia Hinds, a nurse psychotherapist at Barstow Acres Counseling Center in Prince Frederick. Such play "provides a safe distance" that allows clients to project their unconscious onto the figurines, she says.

-- [Kathleen Hom](#)

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