

# DIR:Floortime & COVID-19



**SPOTlight**  
Trust S.D.

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## Floortime and Teletherapy

*Micah-Lee James*

In this year 2020, Life as we have known it suddenly had the rug ripped from under it, and we subsequently found ourselves navigating through the new current normal and creatively discovering new ways to do life in all its aspects; from work to shopping to distanced socializing. Online became more our world reality than our own neighbourhood when those stricter lockdown levels denied us entrance to the outside.

The world moved its offices and classrooms online. This included the therapy room. We found ourselves suddenly needing to quickly learn a new 'strategy' and gather compatible resources, and dive head first into work/education/therapy via a screen.

As therapists working with special needs children and children with difficulty relating, this has been at times challenging and daunting, or interesting and eye-opening, or even at times fun. As a DIR/Floortime therapist I have faced the question 'if engaging face-face for a kiddie is difficult, how can this work via a screen?'

I have personally faced many challenges along this road, beside technical difficulties. When working in the earlier FEDLs you miss the full picture if you are not physically in the same room with the child. It is much harder to co-regulate, follow their lead, draw their attention, connect in an engaged interaction, or follow their eye gaze. Creativity definitely came into play, as well as some collaborative trial and error to determine what worked for each individual child and their families, and most importantly the parent was the primary player in our sessions.

**"Online sessions have been an opportunity for me as a parent to participate in therapy. I am able to incorporate the online lessons into day to day activities. My communication with my son has improved a lot. His level of confidence has improved and it's mainly because I now know how to communicate better with him."**

**(Mother of a 5 year old with ASD)**

## Meet our team

*Kate Bailey*



*Lead Lecturer and Vice Chair of SPOTlight Trust*

**Your Favourite Holiday Destination** – *I love rustic, laid back places such as Florida and Key West in the USA or the Karoo. I guess I'm a Hippie at heart*

**Best and Worst Type of Exercise** – *I can't think of any exercise I don't like but as I get older and wiser yoga, walking on the beach or swimming in the ocean are my firm favourites*

**Favourite Drink** - *Gin & Tonic. Oh, and the proportion of tonic to gin has to be 3:1, so make it a double!!*

**My one wish** - *that my children and grandchildren lived closer...*

However, it has also been a rich and valuable time. Approaching the therapy and child from another angle, thinking outside of the box, is always refreshing. What I loved most with this change was more family access and collaboration. Lockdown put everyone at home; TeleTherapy put me there amongst them. Parents whom previously could not be in therapy sessions due to work commitments were now able to be involved more, and parents whom did attend in-person sessions could grow more together with their child and myself as we navigated coaching and support within this relationship-based model across a screen.

This has been a learning and growing experience for me, my kiddies and their parents. I have had to learn to better communicate, support and encourage across a screen. However, it has been an amazing journey of collaborative engagement and communication growth for all of us, and a time of learning from each other. I have realised more, through this experience, the value of working in team with the parents; the rich wealth in sharing ideas, thoughts, observations, concerns and achievements. Although lockdown has been easing up and more children are returning to in-person therapy, Covid-19 is being stubborn in releasing its grip and lockdown adaptations continue, so some of us are still working online and navigating this journey with our therapy children and families.



Dr Barbara Kalmanson speaks on “Crisis and Opportunity: How to serve parents and children through tele-health during COVID19”. Although specified to online therapy, she discusses topics and thoughts that will also benefit our work with families in-person. She reflects on emotional support to parents, as how they feel is communicated to the child; the child’s feeling of safety; fundamental threats that lead to trauma; the context of relationships; culture and social practices; and a working alliance and supporting the parents. You can listen to her wisdom here <http://kidsattuned.org/Videos/ViewPart.aspx?id=96>

*Despite the initial daunting unknown of TeleTherapy, and the many challenges and questions, DIR/Floortime has proven to me to be a really good model for online therapy as it is relationship based and the emphasis is on caregiver-child relationship and interaction; working through and with the caregiver. Even if (or when) online therapy comes to an end, the learning curve in better supporting and co-working with parents will continue to enrich my therapy.*

**Upcoming  
workshops**

**CAPE TOWN | 27 – 28 MARCH 2021**

Please Complete Our Survey To Decide On Our Next Venue... Bloemfontein Or Port Elizabeth  
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