Therapeutically Applied Role-Playing Games

A Workshop for PAX West 2022

Elizabeth Kilmer, PhD & Adam Davis MA Ed.

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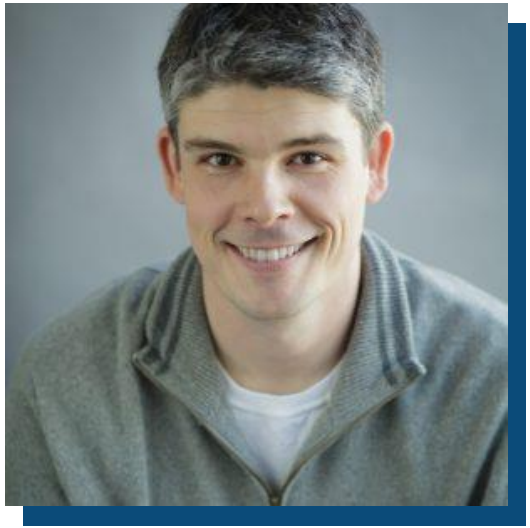

Adam Davis, MA Ed
Founder and Executive Director
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Who is here?

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What is a tabletop role-playing game?

(Small group discussion)

What is a Tabletop Role-Playing Game?

Group members collaborate with each other
with role-playing characters they create
to solve puzzles, uncover treasure, and defeat monsters
in a fictional environment,
creating a story together
using formal rules and participation structures.

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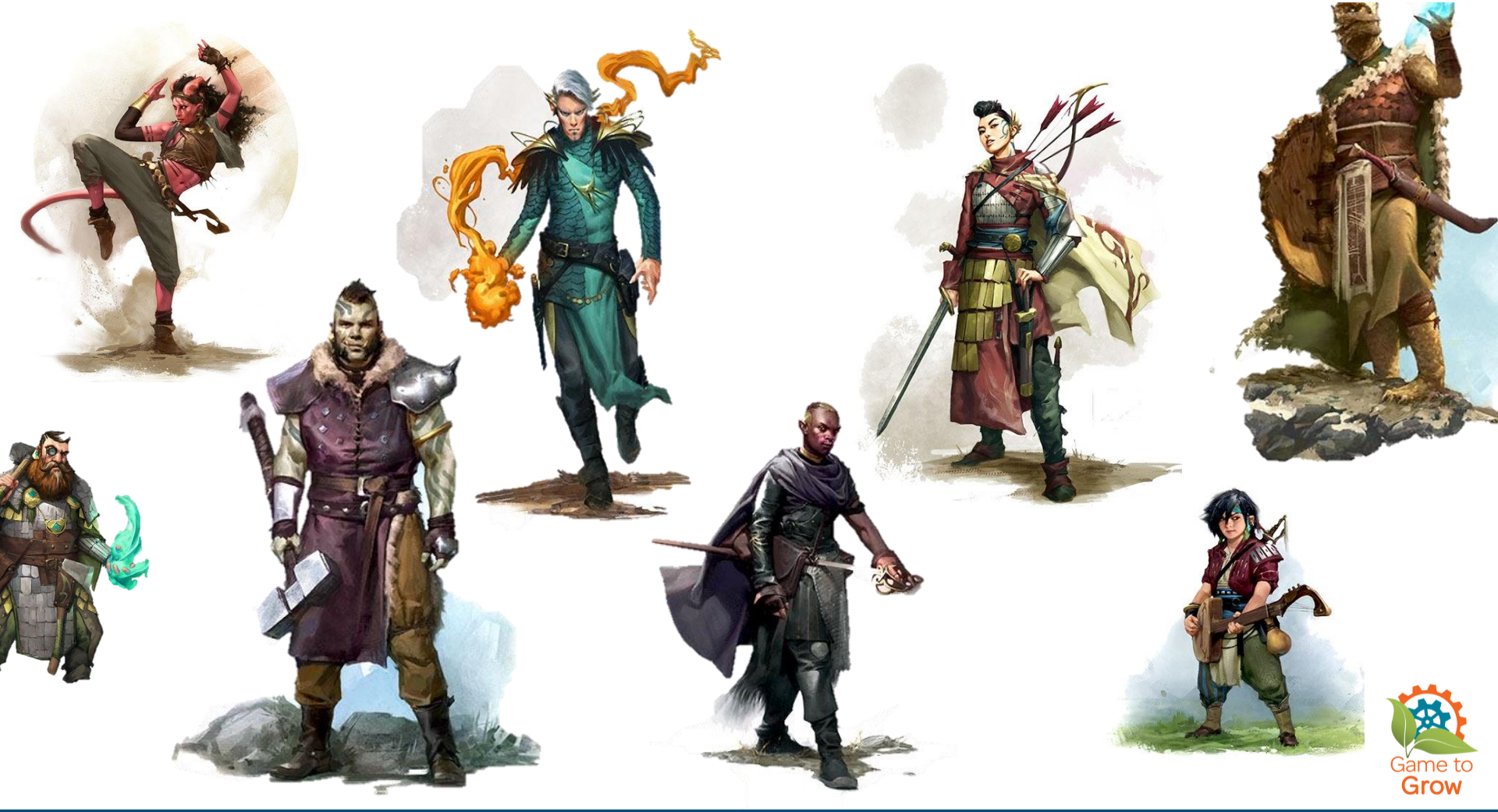

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What are TA-RPGs?

- Synthesis of gameplay with therapeutic techniques.
- In-game and around-the-table opportunities.
- Modelling, skills-practice, and coaching through participants, GM, and NPCs.
- Variability of stress and engagement through game experience.
- Simulation training.

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TA-RPG Literature

- Increasing social connectedness in adults (Abbott, Strauss, Burnett, 2022).
- Growing applications for TA-RPGs across mental health fields (Arenas et al., 2022; Heinrich & Worthington, 2021).
- TTRPGs to support self-reported quality-of-life with autistic youth (Kato, 2019).
- Applied TTRPGs can support knowledge acquisition and support personal and team development (Daniau, 2016).

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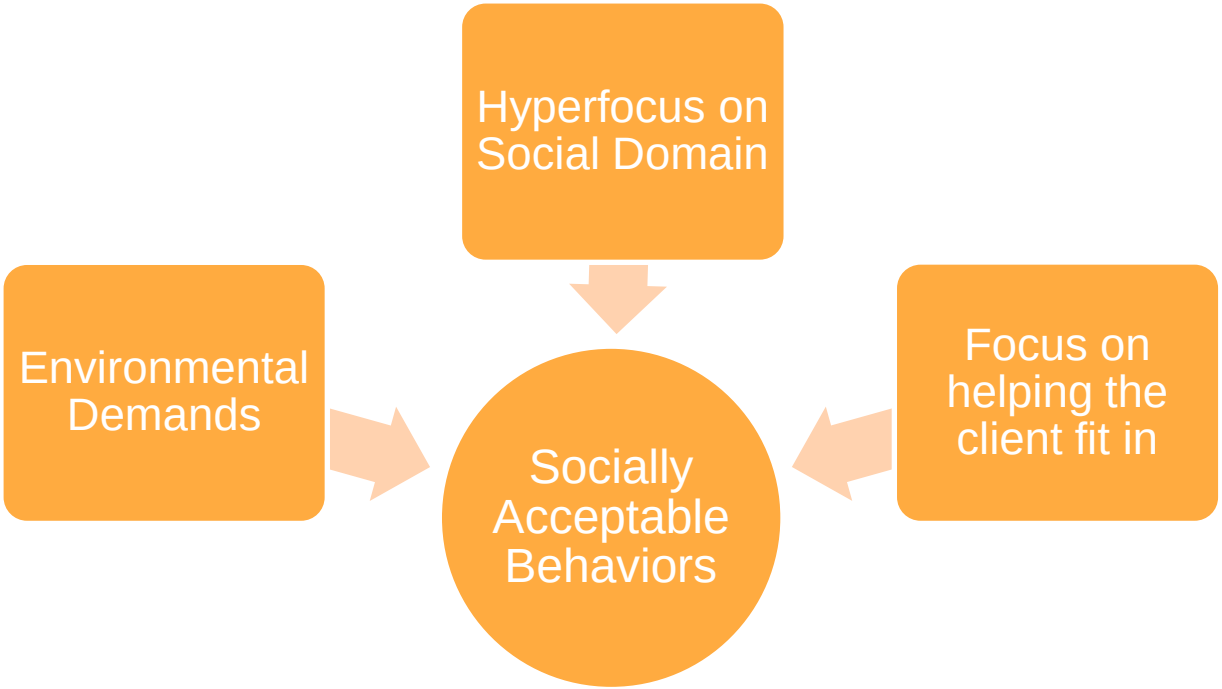
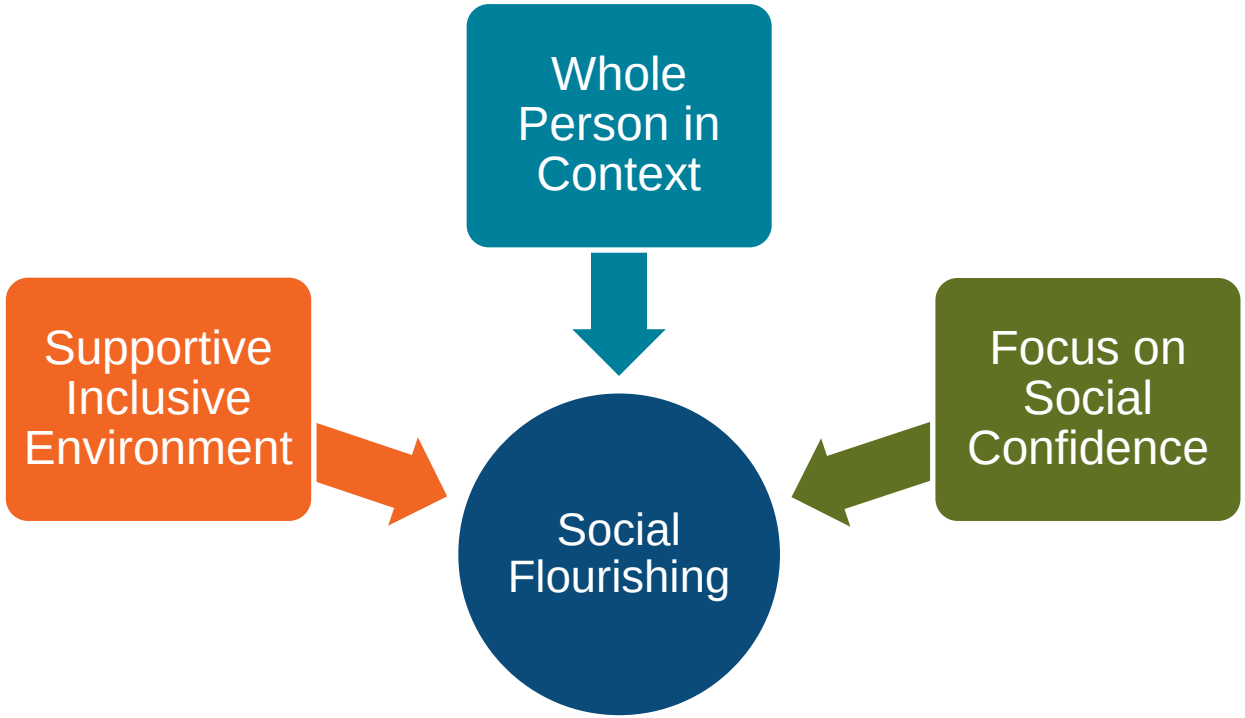
Discrete Skill/Deficit Lens



Social Flourishing Model



What have you learned from a TTRPG?

(Small group discussion)

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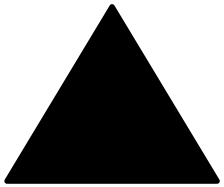
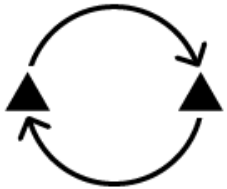
Core Capacities



Regulation



Collaboration

Planning

Perspective

Pretend Play

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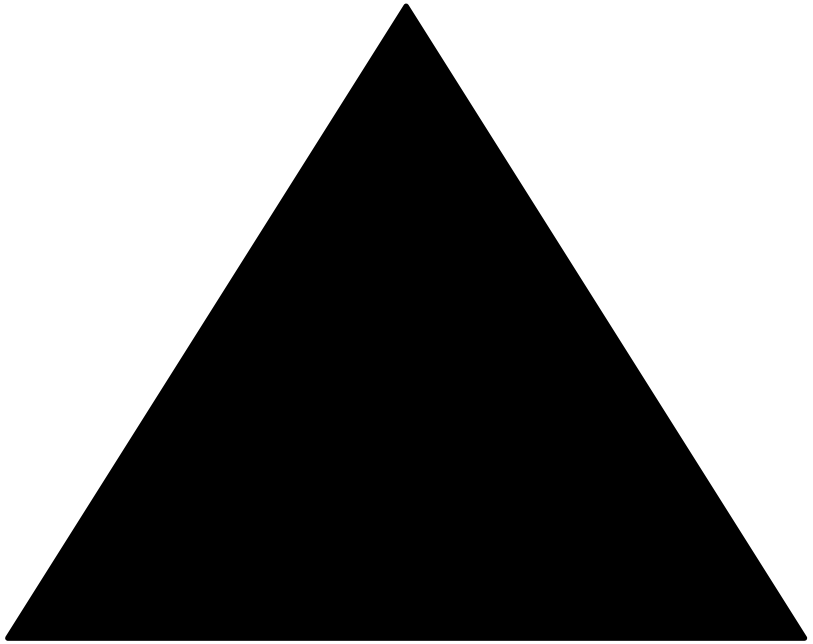
Regulation



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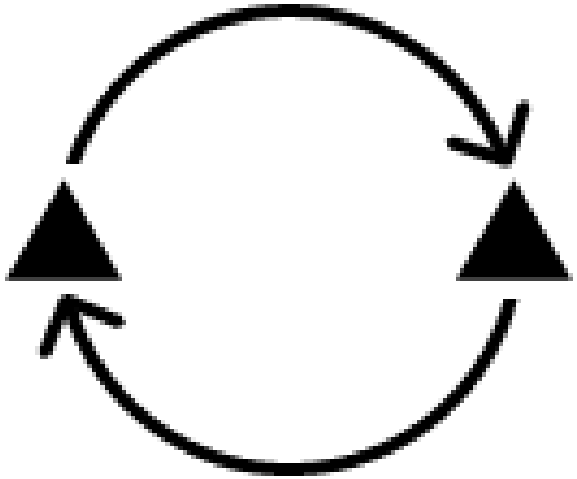
Collaboration



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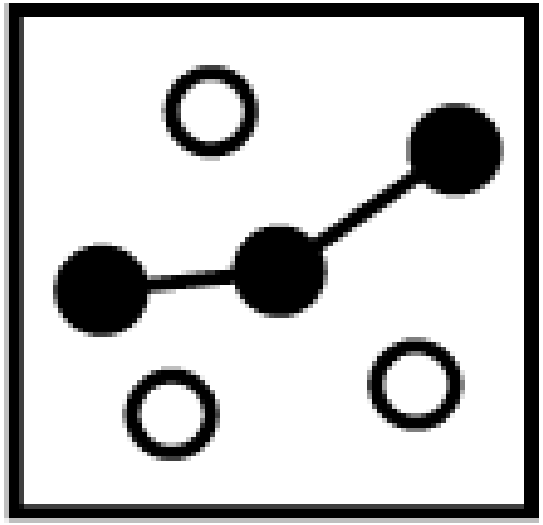
Planning



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Perspective

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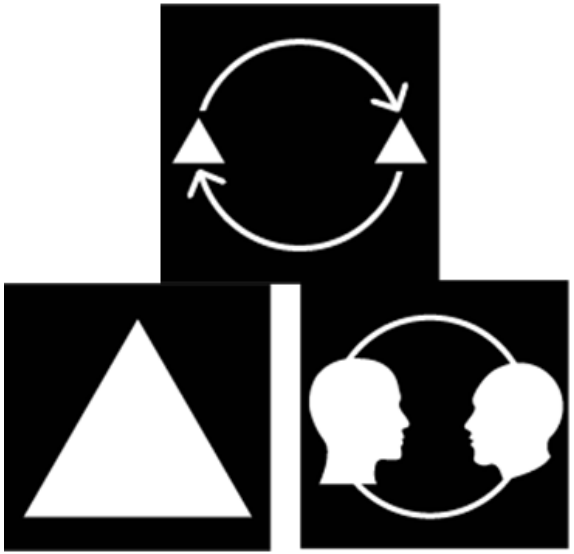
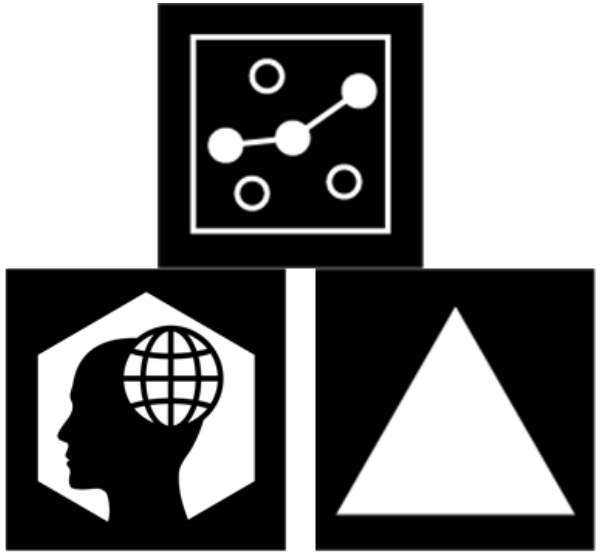
Pretend Play

Going on an adventure…

(Small group activity)

Combining the Blocks





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What have you learned from a TTRPG?

(This time with the Core Capacities)

Regulation	Collaboration	Planning	Perspective	Pretend Play

(Small group activity)

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References

Abbott, M. S., Stauss, K. A., & Burnett, A. F. (2022). Table-top role-playing games as a therapeutic intervention with adults to increase social connectedness. Social Work with Groups, 45(1), 16-31. https://doi.org/10.1080/01609513.2021.1932014

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Get the slides here!

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