

## **Child Life Assessment Approach**

I prefer to take a continuous approach to child life assessment, assessing a child from a psychosocial perspective as well as a cognitive approach. I believe assessment is something that should always be ongoing because a child's condition changes depending on their environment, understanding, comfort level, and numerous other factors that can change minute to minute. Erikson's Psychosocial Theory, "emphasizes the social factors that contribute to a child and family's adjustment" (Cantrell et al., 2024, p.75). His model highlights social disruptions that negatively impact child development, which can be applied to a hospital setting (Cantrell et al., 2024). His theory is also helpful in identifying ways child life specialists shape their interactions with patients to ensure they are providing them with opportunities to interact in their environment to aid their development in an atypical setting such as a hospital.

Additionally, taking a cognitive approach to assessment helps child life specialists see where a child is at developmentally in order to provide the best care possible, and explaining things to them in a way they can understand. Understanding assimilation and accommodation helps medical teams recognize that children act differently when they expect one thing and get something different, which is why preparation for procedures and informing patients about what is happening to them is so important, reducing the amount of trauma that can occur with hospitalization.

Finally, observing and educating through play is essential to my assessment style because, "...children who are hospitalized need opportunities to grow and develop to their maximum potential" (Turner & Fralic, 2009, p. 40). Play supports positive coping and helps normalize hospitalization, while providing an opportunity for patients to feel comfortable asking

questions. Child life specialists can get a good grasp of how a child is coping by observing how they play and paying attention to the questions they ask.

I am positive my assessment style will continue to evolve as I begin working in hospitals and with patients, but that is one of the many reasons I love this field so much because it is ever changing and constantly challenging us to take new approaches and think outside of the box.

## References

Cantrell, K., Sisk, C., & Wittenberg Camp, B. (Eds.). (2024). *Child Life Assessment*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Turner, J. C., & Fralic, J. (2009). Making the Explicit the Implicit: Child Life Specialists Talk About Their Assessment Process. *Child Youth Care Forum*, 38, 39-54.

10.1007/s10566-009-9066-x