

Go to

Play is For All

Play has numerous benefits for children, teens & adults.

“Like putting money in the bank, building in play time is an investment that pays off, increasing physical, mental, emotional and social well-being.”

Connection & Safety

We are connected through play. Play allows for a safe, open and engaged experience of each other, triggering the release of the happy hormone oxytocin. Oxytocin works on the emotional centre of our brain calming us down.

Safe Space

Play provides space for safety and exploring emotions and situations. Draw on the senses in play: what you can see, hear, feel and touch. This will build important bonds with your child and can help them explore and cope with emotions** When we are open and engaged with each other in play, we are ready to explore & learn.

Stress Relief & Emotional Balance

The joy and comfort of play has a calming effect. It builds connections between the thinking part of the brain and the deeper emotional parts. In this way, it helps connect thoughts and feelings, and increases capacity to manage emotional stress.

Playful, rhythmic, sensory experiences are calming for the emotional centre of the brain. These experiences take away from stress responses of fight, flight, freeze.

Try singing, gentle movement, sing-song voice, nursery rhymes & dramatic story telling.

Play Promotes

Social skills of co-operation, negotiation & conflict resolution

Thinking skills, problem solving and creativity.

Confidence & Self-esteem

Talking & listening skills

Emotional well being-stress relief & expression of emotions

Friendships- connection & empathy.

Physical Health - physical play increases fitness & develops motor skills

Improved Relationships

Play can support your child to think, feel and imagine into their own emotions and the emotions of others.

E.G., Puppets and dramatic story telling are a great way to develop your child's capacity to be in touch with their feelings and the feelings of others, developing empathy.

When we use gentle surprise in play, we encourage readiness to learn. Gentle surprise can help engage a child and activate their thinking brain, helping them to reflect and learn social skills.

We are in your corner here at Parentline, to listen, support or advise. Please contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm, Friday 9am to 5pm or Saturdays 9am to 1pm

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****What suppresses playfulness?*****

Are there changes we can make?

- **Environmental Stress**- chaotic settings/loud noises can take away from the security and safety needed for play. Try to create a comfortable space.
- **Excessive/rigid structures**- will diminish the spontaneity and creativity of play. Try to avoid strict rules and structure and let the child lead.
- **Mobile phones**- distract us from in-the-moment play in which we are fully open & engaged with one another. Try organising play time as a mobile phone free time/zone.
- **Fatigue**- physical & mental tiredness can reduce our inclination to play. Try to get enough rest and to set consistent routines at home.
- **Bullying**- fear and anxiety of others will suppress playfulness. Attune to what is going on for your child at school and in friend groups.
- **Illness/Injury**- think creatively for alternatives that are a good fit for you and your child.

Child -led Play

Follow your child's lead & interests

Give time & go at your child's pace

Praise & encourage curiosity & exploration

Don't focus on rules or the "correct" way

Avoid competing with your child

Model co-operation by doing what your child asks you to do

Develop creativity by joining in pretend play-houses/puppets

Curb your desire to give too much help, this will help encourage problem solving

Use descriptive commenting- "**I like how you're taking your time to think about where the next piece of the jigsaw goes**"- this increases the child's awareness of what they are thinking, feeling and doing.

Laughter & Fun

An adult in a playful state of mind sends messages of safety to the child. Try side by side play with your child, letting them take the lead.

****Remember when we are stressed, we suppress our innate playfulness. An accepting, playful and compassionate stance will help promote a calming affect.****

Useful reading & websites

<https://www.epinsight.com/post/promoting-school-readiness-with-descriptive-commenting>

The Incredible Years (3rd Edition) by Carolyn Webster-stratton.

https://www.ci-ni.org.uk/blog-your-hands-are-full-how-outdoor-play-lightens-the-load-parentline-ni/?fbclid=IwZXh0bG9hZWMCMATAAR1oLG-KO7xZFfrWNyxgGQrgKLS-DeNqnwy308JB_3G828-EyDL_B6h29yQ_aem_OIjVcNyagenQ7WIDA3L_TA

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