

# **THE ROLE OF PLAY IN OVERALL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN**

## **WHY IS PLAY IMPORTANT?**

Play is the natural, most effective and most powerful way a child learns. Through play children learn to concentrate, to try out ideas, to imitate grown-ups, to explore the world around them, to develop their imagination, to participate, share and socialise. Young children at play are the most fervent explorers constantly making new discoveries. Play also helps children to manage their feelings and to cope with upsetting things that happen in their lives. Play helps build relationships as well as being relaxing and fun. Children develop intellectually through play eg Hitting a mobile and making it move – learning about cause and effect, posting boxes – learning about space and size; Puzzles – learning about shapes, sizes, number; Sorting toys – learning about number and grouping; Making up their own games – creativity. Children develop motor (physical) skills eg Picking up small things; Using crayons or paint; Throwing and catching; Climbing toys; Hitting balls; Writing.

## ***Children develop socially and emotionally***

From the time toddlers start to play near others, they are learning about relationships. As they get older, play teaches about taking turns and sharing. Play helps children to negotiate when two children want the same toy or want to make rules for games. Children learn about being a leader and being a follower. They learn about how to ask to join in a game.

Play teaches children about relationships and it is one of the important ways that young children, can develop good language skills, and can express and work through their feelings.

Play is the language of very young children. Their play can show you how they are feeling eg aggressive play can reflect frustration or distress.

By playing out situations that have been stressful, through dolls or puppets, mud, paint and water, children can express their feelings. They will often repeat their play until they feel better.

Playing games of skill helps children to learn to control their impulses and wait for success

School age children learn about making rules to get on well with others.

The beginnings of friendships are often built around playing with others.

## **What do children learn through play?**

Research has told us that while it may appear that all children are doing is playing for fun, it is actually a much more important part of a child's developmental process. Playing is a very natural way for children to learn because it uses all of their senses. Playtime is also a cognitive learning exercise where children practice taking in information and organizing it to solve problems and understand their environment.

Although it is important to let children play alone. There are many things that adults can do that will help our children build confidence, self esteem, focus their attention and improve their language and motor skills by interactively playing with them. These skills do not always come naturally and parents need to be taught how to be a good play partner

creative play, imaginative play, manipulative play, physical play, play with natural materials and activities to encourage scientific interest, reasoning skills and individual choice making.

Through activities, conversation and practical example the children learn acceptable ways to express their own feelings and needs, and to respect the feelings and needs of others. Many activities are provided on a daily basis to improve gross and fine motor skills

Through play and the repetition of basic physical skills, children perfect their abilities and become competent at increasingly difficult physical tasks. Play fosters mental development and new ways of thinking and problem solving.

. Dramatic play helps children experiment with and understand social roles. It can also give them countless opportunities for acquiring social skills as they play with others. Through dramatic play, children gradually learn to take each other's needs into account, and appreciate different values and perspectives

"Children develop through experiencing sensory input from their environment. In the formative stages of their development it is through play. It is therefore important for them to experience a variety of stimuli in order for them to develop well integrated movement and co- ordination. These skills are foundational to learning. Well developed eye movements, posture, balance, muscle tone etc. all influence a child's ability to co- ordinate and use both sides of their body, to plan and execute movements, concentrate, focus on tasks, complete work and acquire confidence when attempting academic tasks".

Play activities for children have changed over the past 30 years. Today's children are captivated by electronic media - Television, Computers, Nintendo, Play Station etc. Consequently, children are not getting the balance of stimulation necessary for their overall development. The symptoms of which are manifesting in today's classrooms.

negative effect of lack of play

The development of children's perceptual abilities may suffer when so much of their experience is through television, computers, books, work-sheets, and media that require only two senses. The senses of smell, touch, and taste, and the sense of motion through space are powerful modes of learning.

Children who are less restricted in their access to the outdoors gain competence in moving through the larger world. Developmentally, they should gain the ability to navigate their immediate environs (in safety) and lay the foundation for the courage that will enable them eventually to lead their own lives.

What do they learn through play?

Through play, children discover who they are, learn language, develop social skills, figure out how to solve problems, and engage their imaginations. Play also helps kids develop confidence, and they even learn certain "academic" skills such as basic math concepts, though you — and they — may not realize that's what's going on.

"play is the work of children."

Parents often feel like they should "teach" young children specific things: letters, colors, numbers, and so on. But it's really not necessary. "It's better to let natural curiosity motivate children's play and learning, rather than lead them in what you think they should be doing,

### **perceptual development**

Maximum perceptual development takes place between the ages of three and a half and seven years of age. A child perceives differently from an adult.  
play act as a stimulus in Perceptual Development

### **sensory integration**

Sensory integration is the ability of the brain to process information taken in through the senses.

play assist in the development of each of these areas.

### **the cognitive process**

The manual looks at how a child processes information based upon experiences and learning. It explains in simple terms the involvement of logical reasoning, attention, the organization of information, conceptualization and integration a child takes in information through the senses - sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste and how they integrate the information and act upon it. Certain play activities are important in the development of the cognitive process

### **Social Skills**

This occurs when a child interacts or mix with other people or when children play together. It includes the development of various social abilities such are: relationship, helping others, co-operation, friendly, sharing, caring, independence, toilet habits, dressing.

### **Physical Skills**

This takes place once a child is able to move around independently. It gives a child greater control over himself and his surroundings. Physical development include: running, jumping, playing football, climbing, painting, swimming, playing with toys, cutting, hand and eye co-ordination, drawing/writing.

### **Intellectual Skills**

The child develop new skills/abilities with words and objects, experiment with the properties of creative media and play equipment and solve his own problems in his own way.

Intellectual development include thinking, speaking, listening, concentration, memory, perception, sound/senses, body language and sign language.

### **Communication Skills**

This is a valuable part in other area of development, i.e. intellectual, physical, social and emotional development. Communication development include speaking, listening, helping others, body language, and different expressions (verbally or non-verbally) during various physical activities or emotional development.

### **Emotional Skills**

Play provides an outlet for a child's feelings. Emotional development include happy sad, frustration, cry, excited, lonely and bored.

One of the most important types of play for children is creative play. Creative play is expressed when children use familiar materials in new or unusual ways, and when children engage in role playing and imaginative play. Nothing reinforces the creative spirit more than providing large blocks of time to engage in spontaneous, self-directed creative play throughout the day. However many parents/teachers misunderstand and underestimate the value of play in the lives of children, forgetting that play fosters

physical, mental, and social development. Play also helps develop each child's unique perspective and individual style of creative expression. In addition, play provides an excellent opportunity for integrating and including children with disabilities.

It is through play that children develop essential life skills, they learn how to interact with their peers and with adults, they learn how to choose friends and enemies, they learn how to run around, play team games and sports, they learn to be creative, to adapt and develop new skills, and they learn a whole range of emotions.

It has been said that children who are encouraged to express themselves freely through play are more able to adapt and learn new skills and perform better at school. In conclusion every child needs to be allowed to play, they learn so many skills from playing, and from falling over. Play is essential to every child's development in that good play experiences as a child turn you into a well balanced grown up and prepare you with the essential life skills needed, to run your home, have children and to enjoy it.

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### **sensory integration**

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### **the cognitive process**

Play helps a child process information based upon experiences and learning. It encourages: logical reasoning, attention, the organization of information, conceptualization and integration

A child takes in information through the senses - sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste, then its how they intergrate the information and act upon it.

Certain play activities are important in the development of the cognitive process

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The components of play—curiosity, discovery, novelty, risk-taking, trial and error, pretense, games, social etiquette and other ever more complex adaptive activities— are the same as the components of learning. Humans are designed by nature to play, and have played throughout their evolution

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY**

**play** offers opportunities to teach children when to give or take, when to share, how to get along with others, how to listen, to plan, and to check on how their ideas are working out.

Through good play, children learn to live with themselves and with others and to develop a better sense of how our world operates. Play also offers children the opportunity to experience success and the chance to work through uncomfortable feelings in a secure and supportive way. It has a healing and strengthening power for young children.

Play gives children experience in creating and rearranging possibilities to reach a solution. Play continually confronts children with real situations and problems and provides them the means for working through them

### **Principles of Play**

In order to fully appreciate the benefits of play, it must be realized that young children learn in ways that are different from older children and adults. They learn best from direct sensory encounters with the world (what they can see, hear, taste, and feel) and not through formal academic lessons. Young children learn by manipulating, exploring, and experimenting with real materials and objects. Action and movement characterize learning for young children.

**These basic learning principles of child development apply in play:**

### **Children Learn and Grow as Whole Persons.**

They learn best when their physical and emotional needs are met and they feel safe and secure.

**Children Learn Through Engagement and Through Interaction About Their Experiences.**

They are concrete learners who need direct sensory experiences and opportunities to share and relate those experiences with others.

**All Children Can Learn, and Given Appropriate Settings, Want to Learn.**

They are persistent, curious, and creative; they work hard to make sense of their world.

**Children Learn Quickly When New Information is Presented in Meaningful Ways at Appropriate Times.**

They learn best when they are given the opportunity to actively initiate play activities based on new experiences.

**Children Utilize Differing Learning Styles.**

Various multisensory experiences and materials provide children with the basics for understanding and relating to their world in a way that is comfortable and natural for them.

**Children Grow and Develop Through Predictable Stages, but at Individual Rates.**

Learning is not a linear progression. While all children go through the same stages in development, each child determines his or her own pace and unique way of developing.

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