

Play: The Importance in Childhood

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“I have learned that play is healing. And I’ve come to recognize it as an essential building block for a meaningful life” –Susan Linn. 2008

NCTRC Topics (Job Analysis Knowledge areas)

- Foundational Knowledge:
- #6- Contributions to play, recreation, and leisure to health, and well-being
- Implementation:
- #35- Selection of programs, activities, and interventions to achieve the assessed needs of the person(s) served

Objectives

- Participants will gain a basic understanding of play theories and the importance of advocating for play opportunities
- Participants will discuss the importance of outdoor play and “Nature Deficit Disorder”
- Participants will discuss the effect of media on children and the need for more free play
- Participants will take away play interventions to use with children in a variety of settings.

Play is Important!

- “Through play a child grows, develops, expresses his emotions, and adjusts to his environment... Ill or well, the child needs play.” (Richards & Wolff, 1940)



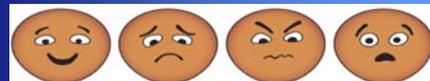
Play Theories- older theories

- Surplus Energy Theory
- Recreation Theory
- Instinct-Practice Theory



Play Theories- Recent Theories

- Catharsis Theory
- Recapitulation Theory
- Relaxation Theory
- Behavioristic Theory
- Psychoanalytic Theory



Play Theories- contemporary

- Self-Expression Theory
- Stimulus-Arousal Theory of Play
- Competence-Effectance Theory of Play



Essential characteristics of Play

- 1-Intrinsically Motivated
- 2-Freely Chosen
- 3-Pleasurable
- 4-Nonliteral
- 5-Actively Engaged

You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.
-Plato

The Purpose of Play

Benefits of Play

- For children:
 - Sharpens our minds
 - Helps us grow
 - Keeps us healthy
 - Boosts creativity
 - Solves problems
 - Make decisions
 - Express ourselves
 - Communicate with others
 - Recognize boundaries



The Purpose of Play

When we don't play...

- Less creative
- Less productive
- More sedentary
- More easily fatigued
- More susceptible to obesity
- More likely to encounter social problems
- More likely to encounter emotional stress



The Purpose of Play

Where do you....?




Play Maps

- Create a map of your play space as a child
 - Outdoor
 - Indoor





Outdoor and Free Play

- The American Academy of Pediatrics published a report affirming the central importance of play for all children and the decline in play for many children in the US (2006).
- Play is so important to optimal child development that it has been recognized by the United Nations for a Human Right for Every Child (Article 31)

Outdoor Play and Nature

- Play in the outdoors, allows children to explore their world and their own mind and body
- Play in nature allows self-directed play and is an active form of play (vs. passive)

Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights

- Discover wilderness – prairies, dunes, forests, savannas, and wetlands
- Camp under the stars
- Follow a trail
- Catch and release fish, frogs, and insects
- Climb a tree
- Explore nature in neighborhoods and cities
- Celebrate heritage
- Plant a flower
- Play in the mud or a stream
- Learn to Swim

Nature-Deficit Disorder

- Defining “Nature-Deficit Disorder”- Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*
- Comments from children
 - “I like to play indoors better, ‘case that’s where all the electrical outlets are”
 - “Nature inspires creativity in children by demanding visualization and full use of the senses”

Children prefer to play outdoors!

🌳	☁️
🔥	💧

Play in parks and playgrounds:

- Children prefer the outdoors
- Contact with the four “elements”

– Nature Play-

- Contact with nature- part of a “balanced diet” of childhood experiences- healthy development and general well-being-

AAP Statement on Media, 2013

- What is media?
- Negatives of media exposure
- Positive aspects of media
- Average 8-10 year old spends how many hours a day with some form/variety of media?
- Teenagers?



AAP Statement on Media, 2013

- What % of 12-17 year old have their own cell phone today?
- Multitasking- good or bad?
- What can healthcare providers do?
 - Physicians should ask 2 media related questions and provide age-appropriate resources at visits



Recommendations

- Limit the amount of total entertainment screen time to less than 1-2 hours per day
- Discourage screen media exposure for children under 2 years of age
- Keep screens out of children's bedrooms
- Monitor what children are watching and accessing
- Coviev with children and discuss important topics
- Model active parenting, set rules about media

TruceTeachers.org

- Excessive Screen Time can...
 - Undermine children's healthy development
 - Makes it harder to build relationships with people and nature
 - Has a negative effect on play
 - Contributes to boredom
 - Leads to nagging
 - Promotes violent, sexualized, and stereotyped behavior



http://www.truceteachers.org/docs/turn_off_screens_turn_on_play_bookmark_english.pdf

Which is better?




The case for boredom: When a crayon is better than an iPad

- *“The problem with starting kids out young, with every time they have to amuse themselves they’re handed a screen, is that they never have the opportunity to develop the inner resources to amuse themselves. I think we need to bring back boredom. The experience of having nothing to do is critical to creativity.” -Susan Linn (co-founder Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood).*

Create a Play Manifesto

- Ponder, self-assess and affirm playfulness.
- Declare your playful self today and create a Play Manifesto
 - Align your thoughts, words and actions to promote a destiny of playfulness as a signature habit of mind and a character strength.
 - Make it a priority to stay play-nourished (Stuart Brown, 2009) as self care practice

it's not "just play"

Play is an essential part of early learning. It is the lifeblood of the learning process. As children play they are developing the cognitive, socio-emotional and physical skills they will need to take them into a successful adulthood.

They are developing their curiosity, problem solving, intentionality, flexibility, and verbal & non verbal skills.

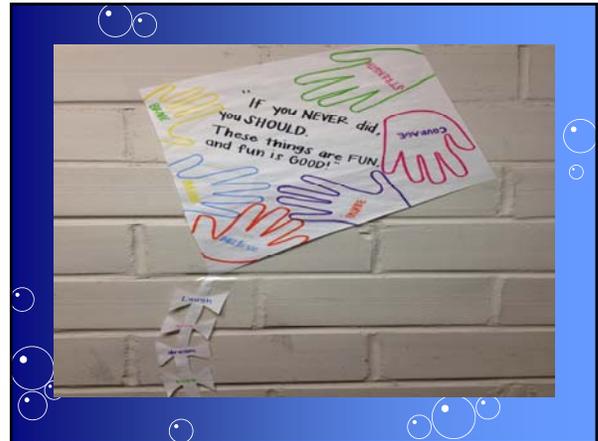
Socio-emotionally they are developing their emotional intelligence - learning confidence, cooperation, negotiation, sharing, empathy and how to communicate appropriately.

Physically their fine motor and gross motor skills are being practised and developed.

It's not "just play" they are skills for life!

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Loose Parts

- The Theory of Loose Parts, Simon Nicholson, 1972
 - 1. There is no evidence that some children are born creative, and others are not
 - 2. There is evidence that all children love to interact with variables, concepts and ideas. With many things children love to play, experiment, discover, and invent and have fun.

"In any environment, both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it."

Loose Parts

- The "discovery method"- self-instructed patterns, children can learn readily and easily in a lab-type environment where they can experiment and find things for themselves
- In play- loose parts are the materials that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, and taken apart and put back together in multiple ways. They are the materials with no directions that can be used individually or combined

Your discovery with "loose parts"- What can you create?

Play

- "In a broad sense, play is what lifts people out of the mundane. I sometimes compare play to oxygen—it's all around us, yet goes mostly unnoticed or unappreciated until it is missing."
- (Stuart Brown, 2009)

The Purpose of Play