



Parenting during pandemic

Day 24: The importance of play for children.

Sometimes people think that play is something children do to fill otherwise empty periods of time, a filler task between the important stuff, a break from the real work. Research shows, however, that play is a very important activity for a child. Play has been shown to be instrumental in a child's brain development, in development of social and emotional understanding, in physical health and wellbeing, in attachments and bonds children make, in cognitive development and more. Play is actually thought to be so fundamental to a child's development that the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights recognised play as a right of every child.

In yesterday's blog we considered Piaget's stages of cognitive development and noted that the first stage is where children learn about the world by moving around in it and exploring things in their environment. Essentially, they play. As we noted, children move through the stages of cognitive development and play allows them to practice different situations and take different roles in those situations as they begin to be able to understand perspectives. Play allows children to be creative and roleplay facing their fears.

Playing with others means children learn about leadership, turn taking, resolving conflict, negotiating, standing up for themselves and/others. Play can develop resilience and confidence and allow children to practice decision making as well as discovery of their preferences.

When children play with the significant adults in their lives, this strengthens the bonds between the adults and the children. This is sometimes known as attachment and there is a lot of research evidence about the importance of attachments children make early on. When adults play with children and are fully engaged with this, children feel that the adults are paying attention to them, that they are important and the bonds built from this are enduring. From a parents perspective, playing with children gives an insight into their world, what they think about things, what they enjoy and anything they are worried about or afraid of. All of this can aid communication between parents and children.

Play is also important in education. It may be seen as the thing children do at break times but research shows that playing in the playground is an active part of children's development. This is often where children develop socially and emotionally. There is also evidence about cognitive development linked to play in the playground, particularly around readiness for learning.

While children are at home during lockdown due to the pandemic and parents are trying to juggle work and home schooling, it can be helpful to remember that children are not just playing to fill the time, this is an active process that is helping develop many of their skills. If you can get involved, it will enhance the bonds between you and your child...and it's also great fun!

We hope these tips are helpful. Well done on managing another day off school and we hope you will join us again tomorrow.

Tomorrow's topic: What are children learning from lockdown and social distancing?

Please contact us with questions, comments or topics you'd like to see covered. We'd love to hear your feedback.

Wishing you a safe and healthy path through this pandemic.