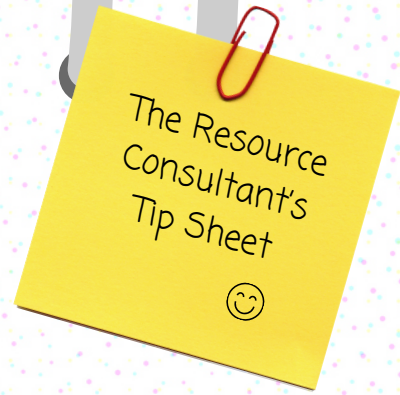




JANUARY



“THE POWER OF PLAY”

Play is “any spontaneous or organized activity that provides enjoyment, entertainment, amusement or diversion.” In simpler terms, it’s a time when we are:

- Having fun
- Being creative and spontaneous
- Creating original ideas and acting on them
- Engaged and concentrated

While playing, children learn and develop important skills they will continue to use throughout their lifetime. Problem solving, creativity, and willingness to take risks are just a few of the skills developed through play.

Think of play as a prescription from a doctor. It’s something they need every day and should be a balance of structured and unstructured play.

Structured play requires a child to follow directions or rules, and is guided by an adult. This could include board games, puzzles, and organized classes like dance or art, or team sports like soccer.

Unstructured play allows for children to do whatever interests them, without as many directions or guides. This can be playing on the jungle gym, playing dress up, and exploring the outdoors are all examples of unstructured play.

The possibilities are endless!

Did You Know?

- **70% of the brain wiring** is completed by age three. Play is critical to this process!
- **Socio-dramatic play** can help children learn to cope with big emotions or stressful events.
- **Play is a great form of exercise** that helps children develop strong muscles, improve bone density, and increase cardio-vascular function.



Types of Play:

There are **6** stages of play during early childhood, all of which are important for your child’s development.

All of the stages of play involve **exploring, being creative, and having fun.**

The next list explains how children’s play changes by age as they grow and develop social skills. However, remember that the ages are just guidelines and children will pass through the stages at their own pace.



Unoccupied Play (Birth-3 Months)

At this stage baby is just making a lot of movements with their arms, legs, hands, feet, etc. They are learning about and discovering how their body moves.

Solitary Play (Birth-2 Years)

This is the stage when a child plays alone. They are not interested in playing with others quite yet.

Spectator/Onlooker Behavior (2 Years)

During this stage, a child begins to watch other children playing but does not play with them.



Parallel Play (2+ Years)

When a child plays alongside or near others but does not play with them this stage is referred to as parallel play.

Associative Play (3-4 Years)

When a child starts to interact with others during play, but there is not a large amount of interaction at this stage. A child might be doing an activity related to the kids around him, but might not actually be interacting with another child. For example, kids might all be playing on the same piece of playground equipment but all doing different things like climbing, swinging, etc.

Cooperative Play (4+ years)

When a child plays together with others and has an interest in both the activity and other children involved in playing they are participating in cooperative play.

What Parents Can Do:

- Repetition may be boring to you, but it's not to your child.
- Make time for play!
- Provide different experiences (environment, materials).
- Get involved!
- Let your child take the lead.
- Let your child determine the pace of play.
- Don't force or prolong play.
- Consider safety /Make an area safe for children to play.



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