



The Power of Special Playtimes



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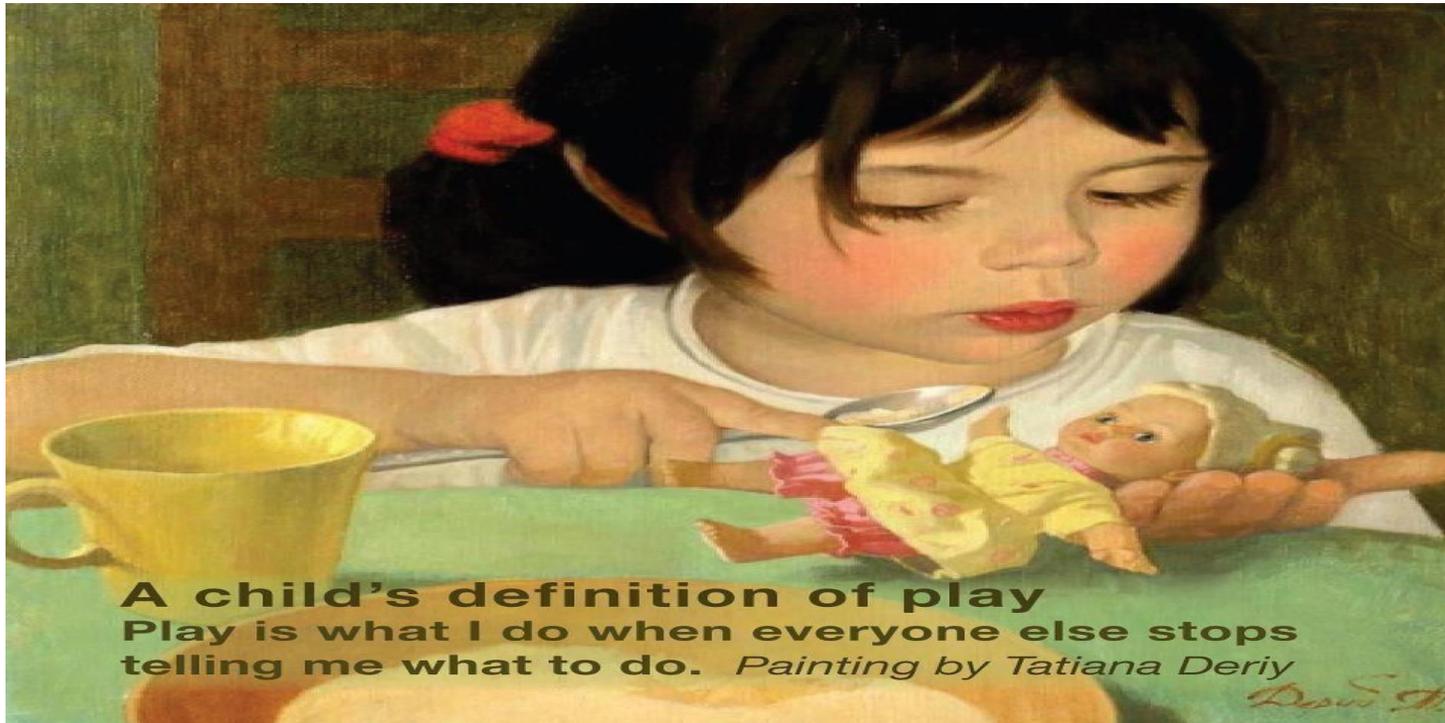
Aims

- Gain an insight into the Therapeutic Powers of Play!
- Learn about setting up special playtimes.
- Learn about the relational benefits of play.
- Learn how to introduce, and experience play that will build healthy attachments and relationships.
- Learn ways to maximise on the available time you have.
- Learn how to integrate play and focused attention in your day and schedule.

The Benefits of Play

- ▶ Play is **intrinsically** motivated and driven.
- ▶ Essential for cognitive, physical, emotional and social **development**. Playing is at the heart of a child's development - it supports all aspects of that development.
- ▶ Allows children to make **mistakes** and learn from them **safely**.
- ▶ Play **builds & strengthens** relationships - friendships, parent/child relationships, professional relationships.

Play is the most important thing a child can do!



A child's definition of play
Play is what I do when everyone else stops
telling me what to do. *Painting by Tatiana Deriy*

Play supports, fosters & develops my:

- ▶ Creativity
- ▶ Imagination
- ▶ Problem-Solving Skills
- ▶ Coping Skills
- ▶ Resilience
- ▶ Self-Confidence
- ▶ Self-Image
- ▶ Brain
- ▶ **And, it is super fun for me!!**

When children play:

- ▶ They **learn** all about themselves, their bodies, their environment and people around them.
- ▶ They learn to **express** their feelings, experiences and problems in a safe way.
- ▶ They learn to take **control** and make **choices** and **decisions**.
- ▶ They try to make **sense** of their experiences by playing them out.
- ▶ They **rehearse** or practice for real life situations.
- ▶ They develop **copng skills** by making unmanageable realities more manageable in symbolic play.

Play is Therapeutic!

- ▶ “Toys are the child’s words and play is the child’s language.” - Haim Ginott
- ▶ “Enter into children’s play, and you will find the place where their minds, hearts, and souls meet.” — Virginia Axline
- ▶ “When you’re free, you can play. And when you’re playing, you become free.” - Heidi Kaduson
- ▶ “Charles E. Schaefer has discussed the therapeutic powers of play in numerous published works (1993, 2003a, and 2003b).

The Therapeutic Powers of Play

Play and playful rituals and routines have a profound way of nourishing relationships!

- ▶ “The parent-child connection is the most powerful mental health intervention known to mankind” (Bessel van der Kolk)
- ▶ “The more healthy relationships a child has, the more likely he will be to recover from trauma and thrive. Relationships are the agents of change and the most powerful therapy is human love” (Dr. Bruce Perry)

- ▶ Play is how children communicate!
- ▶ Play is where a child is most comfortable, it is how we learn about the world and our place in it.
- ▶ Play is a way of being close to someone but also as repair when times are tough.
- ▶ When we play with children we join their world. Play brings a sense of security, offers a way to communicate and resolve conflicts.

The Role of the Adult!

- ▶ Adults who support play and playing, can use playing and playfulness to address areas where a child may be struggling, in any domain of the child's development.
- ▶ “You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.” Plato
- ▶ Play brings us together for a shared joyful experience.
- ▶ Removing expectations allows us to ‘be’, we can have fun together just because we like each other!

Play Together & Independent Play

- ▶ Balance is key!
- ▶ Try to spend some time playing with your child and also allow ample time and opportunities for their own independent play. In care and education settings try to create balance in play opportunities too!
- ▶ Children develop independent play skills through lots and lots of interactive play with an attuned adult. When you play with your child you are supporting their development of independent play skills.

**Remember to
soothe yourself
first!!!**



In Special Playtimes the focus is on Play & Connection!

- ▶ In play children learn without teaching:
 - ▶ What is fun!
 - ▶ What they like
 - ▶ Where the limits are
 - ▶ How to be flexible
 - ▶ How to problem solve
 - ▶ How to share space and equipment
 - ▶ Listening skills
 - ▶ Empathy

Adult messages to impart:

- ▶ I am here
- ▶ I see you
- ▶ I understand you
- ▶ I care about you

Setting up Special Playtimes.

- ▶ Select a consistent time and place to have a once-per-week special playtime with your child.
- ▶ Make sure it is a time when you can be regulated, and that you and your child's basic needs are met.
- ▶ Your special play time should be in a place you won't be disturbed.
- ▶ Playtimes should be 20-30 minutes in length.
- ▶ Use simple, non-mechanical toys that facilitate expression, e.g. art materials, baby doll, animals, cars, blocks, play phone etc..
- ▶ Let your child know how long the play time will be in advance.

- ▶ We need phones away and undistracted time, which is a challenge as we are often juggling many different things at a time.
- ▶ Length of time is not as important as quality of time - important thing is to honour the time you have committed to.
- ▶ Lose our competitiveness and rule following.
- ▶ Bring Presence, Attunement, Curiosity and Compassion.

During the Special Play Time

- ▶ Give your child your full attention.
- ▶ Connect with them at their level e.g. on floor, at table etc.
- ▶ Your child is the boss of the play - you don't choose or lead the play.
- ▶ Join in actively and playfully following their direction.
- ▶ Your purpose in this play is connection not teaching or correction.
- ▶ The objective of the child leading is that they feel empowered, worthwhile and connected to you.
- ▶ Say what you see - to let the child know you are interested and involved in their play.
- ▶ Name your child's thoughts and feelings with words and actions - shows you understand your child and that they matter.
- ▶ Recognise your child's ability and effort - builds up internal evaluation systems

Ending/ After Special Play Times

- ▶ Give your child a 5-minute and 1-minute notice that special play time will be ending.
- ▶ We have 5 minutes left to play together today and then it will be time to go have hot chocolate.
- ▶ By continuing the bonding experience outside of the play through a nurturing activity you help extend and generalize the connection outside of the play session.
- ▶ If they express sadness that the time has ended, use statement of fact response - the time is all up, helpful if there is a clock there to show.
- ▶ Remind them there will be another special playtime next week.

Parent-Child Relational Play

- ▶ “Sensory play, touch, movement and rhythm are paramount when working on parent-child relational play” (Prendiville and Fearn, 2017, P. 128). (Also relevant in professional relationships)
- ▶ Playful experiences in which the parent and child are engaged in the same activity e.g. rhythmic rocking, dancing together
- ▶ Touch and Massage
- ▶ Mirroring and Copying Games
- ▶ Peek a Boo and Hide and Find Games
- ▶ Swinging a child in a blanket

Interactive Play Together

- ▶ Shared Attention
- ▶ Mutual Joy
- ▶ Fun & Connection
- ▶ Less Stress, More Success!!
- ▶ Physical Play, Sensory Play, Creative Play, Game Play...
Follow their lead!
- ▶ You can also introduce some specific play ideas too,
but remember if it is not fun it is not play!

How to introduce, and experience play that will build healthy attachments.

- ▶ We must introduce play experiences with enthusiasm. If we show we are excited to play with the child it takes away the 'she/he/they has to' aspect of interactions.
- ▶ You are bringing intention to the experience.
- ▶ We must slow down, attune and connect with their pacing for the connection to feel authentic to the child.

Cotton Ball Play

Cotton ball blow

Cotton ball touch

Touch guessing games

Game Play

- ▶ Family Games Night/Afternoon
- ▶ Time Limited Games
- ▶ Choice Bag
- ▶ Press Pause if Needed



Creative Play

- ▶ Joint Creations
- ▶ Slime
- ▶ Playdough
- ▶ Painting
- ▶ Creative Art Activities



Playdough



- ▶ Flour
- ▶ Salt
- ▶ Food Colouring
- ▶ Water

Gloop/Oobleck



- ▶ 2 Parts Cornflour
- ▶ 1 Part Water

Shared Projects



Try to integrate play and focused attention into your day!

- ▶ We already spend a lot of time together, so making that time playful and focussing on fun can add connection and joy to your relationship.
- ▶ Make mealtimes fun!
- ▶ I saw and thought of you
- ▶ Playful Routines - add a puppet, create a game..
- ▶ Storytelling and remembering...
- ▶ Fun walks - egg carton hunts, sensory scavenger hunt, movement challenges
- ▶ Travel Games - Category Games, Music, Quizzes,

Maximizing on the time you have.

- ▶ Intentional and connected.
- ▶ Dropping our need to correct and teach.
- ▶ Let go of guilt!



Thank you!

- ▶ I hope you have also enjoyed the course content and found it useful. Happy Playing!!
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