

Peek-a-Boo!

A Lesson on the Importance of Play

Playgroup #2

Materials Needed

- Parents should bring with them simple toys, such as cardboard boxes, dolls, and building blocks.

Handouts

- Why is Play Important?
- Games to Play with Your Child by Age

Introduction

Share with the mothers in your group your favorite play activity as a child (i.e. playing dress-up, building forts, etc.). Then have the mothers take turns sharing their favorite childhood activity. As a group, discuss why you think that play is so important for child development.

Lesson Plan

Lesson Objectives

- Understand the benefits of child-centered play
- Know how to promote play in your home
- Learn some simple games to play with your child by age

Benefits of Child-Centered Play

According to the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights, play is a right of every child (Ginsburg, 2007). Child-centered play – play that is not guided by adults and adult rules – contributes to cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and youth. Play enhances child development because it:

- Allows children to use creativity
- Develops a child's imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength
- Teaches children to engage in and interact with the world around them
- Helps children develop new competencies
- Enhances confidence and resilience
- Teaches children to work in groups, to share, to negotiate, to resolve conflicts, and to learn self-advocacy skills
- Helps children practice decision-making skills
- Allows children to move at their own pace and discover areas of interest
- Builds active and healthy bodies

As parents interact with their children through play, they are able to see the world through their children’s eyes. Parents learn to communicate more effectively with their children through play. Playing with your children helps to build enduring relationships and offers an opportunity for parents to nurture and teach their children (Ginsburg, 2007).

Play has also been shown to increase a child’s ability to adjust to the school setting. It may even increase a child’s learning readiness, learning behaviors, and problem-solving skills (Ginsburg, 2007).

How to Promote Play

According to the Alliance for Childhood (2004), parents should do the following to promote play:

- *Reduce or eliminate screen time* – Be prepared with simple toys and suggestions for make-believe play to encourage your child to be creative.
- *Reduce adult-organized activities* – Over-scheduling your child’s life leaves little time for play. Placing too much pressure on your child to excel in multiple areas can overwhelm a child and result in emotional distress or mental health concerns (Ginsburg, 2007).
- *Choose simple toys* – Simple toys and natural materials, such as dolls, blocks, wood, boxes, and sand, encourage children to use their imagination or create their own scenes.
- *Encourage outdoor activities* – Reserve time for your child to run, climb, and play in the mud every day.
- *Engage your child in real work* – Adult activities, like cooking, raking, and cleaning, inspire children to play. Children will help for a short time and then engage in their own play.

Games to Play with Your Child by Age

Birth – 1 year old	1 – 3 years old	3 – 5 years old
Move a brightly colored toy or object in front of your baby and let him follow it with his eyes.	Make a pull toy by tying cereal boxes together with pieces of string. This will encourage your child to walk.	Make a puppet out of a sock or paper bag and watch your child’s imagination soar.
Play Peek-a-Boo by hiding your face or a toy behind a blanket.	Play with a ball. Start by rolling it across the floor and then move on to throwing and catching.	Play dress-up with old clothes and Halloween costumes.
Hold a pillow or toy by the feet of your three month old and let him kick at it.	Invite a friend over to play. Watch as they chase each other, copy each other, or empty out boxes or bookcases.	Build a fort out of blankets and boxes or chairs.

While singing to your baby, help him clap along, shake a rattle, or bang on some pots and pans.	Teach your child new words by naming everyday objects around the house.	Pretend to be different animals. Make sounds and move around like that animal would.
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Note. Playing for Keeps (n.d.). "Play ideas by age," retrieved on September 17, 2007, from <http://playingforkeeps.org>

Activity

Ahead of time, tell each mother to bring to the playgroup some simple toys, such as cardboard boxes, dolls, and building blocks. Encourage them to bring toys that promote creativity.

After the lesson, put all of the simple toys in the center of the floor and allow the children to play with them without any parent involvement for 5 or 10 minutes. Have the parents observe how their children play.

After the children have played alone for awhile, allow the mothers to play with their children. Remind moms to play *with* their children – following the lead of their child. Encourage parents to see the world from their child's perspective. Parents who see the world through their child's eyes learn to communicate more effectively with their children. According to Kenneth Ginsburg, MD, parent-child interactions that occur through play tell the child that their parent is fully paying attention to them, which helps to build enduring relationships.

Suggested Reading

365 Games Babies Play: Playing, Growing and Exploring with Babies from Birth to 15 Months

by Sheila Ellison

Games to Play with Babies - 3rd Edition

by Jackie Silberg & Laura D'Argo

References

Ginsburg, K.R. (2007). The importance of play in promoting healthy child development and maintaining strong parent-child bonds. *American Academy of Pediatrics, 119*(1). Retrieved September 17, 2007, from www.pediatrics.org

The Alliance for Childhood (2004). Time for play, every day: Why play is one of the healthy essentials of childhood. *ENCOUNTER: Education for Meaning and Social Justice, 17*(2). Retrieved on September 17, 2007, from EBSCO database.