

The Importance of Play

Janette Pepall

God has given children the gift of playfulness. They are never happier than when they are playing.

What Is Play?

Play is anything we do for pleasure or recreation. Although play is fun, it can be described as children's work. It helps in all areas of development and learning. It is important to know how, when, where, and with whom children play.

Ten Benefits of Play

1. Play gives children knowledge.

- They learn and practice new skills.
- It encourages them to be curious.
- They solve problems.
- They learn lessons they will use as adults.

2. Play improves children's communication.

- They learn new language.
- They share their language with other children and adults.
- They learn about nonverbal language.

3. Play improves children's development.

- It builds physical strength.
- It improves coordination.
- It helps children use small muscles, such as the muscles needed to hold a pencil.
- It helps children use large muscles, such as the muscles needed for kicking a ball.
- It teaches and encourages reading and writing.
- It encourages good social skills.

4. Play helps children understand their world.

- Young children cannot use words to talk about their pain. Older children may be too traumatized to talk about their pain.
- Using art, playing games, and role-playing are especially important. These types of play encourage children to express their feelings, thoughts, and opinions about events.
- Children's play helps adults talk to them about their feelings. Adults may also understand better why children may be misbehaving.

5. Play encourages children's creativity.
6. Play makes children happy.
7. Play builds relationships between children and between children and adults. It builds trust.
8. Play encourages a sense of belonging.
9. Play gives a sense of achievement and encourages positive self-esteem.
10. Play fulfils what God intended for His youngest children!

As adults, we need to allow time for children to play, especially during stressful times of their lives. Providing children with a place to play, an opportunity to play, and things to play with will help ensure that they grow strong and healthy.