

BECOMING A PLAY PARTNER

WHY PLAY?

PLAY IS LEARNING FOR CHILDREN

Playing is work, for a child. It helps develop language, creativity, imagination, gross and fine motor skills and social competence. "Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them. Play allows children to create and explore a world they can master, conquering their fears while practicing adult roles, sometimes in conjunction with other children or adult caregivers." (Ginsberg, 2007)

HOW TO START?

DRAWING THE CHILD'S ATTENTION... STEP RIGHT IN

Child Interest Begins the Activity

- Put the child in a situation where there are many desired age appropriate objects, that are multisensory, letting the child select the most interesting item.

Set up Your Environment

- Control and engineer the room so that you have less competition from other toys and people.
- Keep items you are not using neatly stored to reduce clutter and reduce distraction. This can help keep a child from "bouncing" between toys.

Commit to the Experience

- Get at the child's eye level
- Draw attention to your face and facial expressions, over emphasize your emotions, reactions and expressions.
- Move back if the child moves back
- Keep motivation while increasing comfort thus allowing for more adult participation

REFERENCES

Ginsberg, Kenneth R. "The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds." (n.d.): n. pag. *The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds*. American Academy of Pediatrics, 1 Jan. 2007. Web. 16 Apr. 2015.

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WHAT'S NEXT?

OBSERVE. IMITATE. EXPAND.

- Observe the child interacting with the toy, watch what they do.
- Imitate- Join the child and imitate their play. Follow the child's lead and do it their way.
- Finally expand on the play. Introduce a new item or sound. For example a car that only made "zoom" as a sound can now "beep" and "crash". Model some ideas of what can be done with the new elements. Watch how the child reacts and responds to the changes, adding language about what they are doing.

WHAT TOYS SHOULD I CONSIDER...

- Look for toys that will draw the child in. Consider their favorite colors, familiar characters and favorite themes.
- Find toys that are at the child's appropriate developmental level, but still can provide a challenge.
- Choose multi-sensory toys- lights, movement, textures, buttons, knobs, buzzers, sound effects- all can assist in processing and keeping attention.
- Look for toys that can be used for many different purposes. Open ended toys such as blocks, legos or play dough offer opportunities for creativity and repeated play opportunities.
- Search for toys that can lead to inclusive play, such as sharing and turn taking.