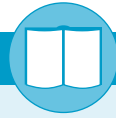


Children learn through play

Daniel's story



Four-year-old Daniel was playing by himself in the sandpit. He had lots of dinosaurs. Lucy came along and asked if she could play. Daniel hugged all the dinosaurs to himself and said 'No, they are all mine!' Daniel's grandfather who was sitting nearby said to Daniel 'You know Daniel, if you give Lucy some dinosaurs you will still have plenty to play with and you will have a friend to play with as well'. Daniel gave some dinosaurs to Lucy. They played with the dinosaurs in the sandpit for a short time, then both went off to play together with some cars.



What is play?

Play is children's language, children's work and children's relaxation. Children need to play for healthy development. Children's play belongs to children. It is for all children, all ages from babyhood on, and all abilities.

Children decide what to play and how to play. Play is their time to be free and to enjoy. Play can be pretending, learning a new skill, dressing up, being active or being quiet. Play can be with other children or alone. Adults can join in if they are invited, in fact young children often love best to play with parents, but children make the rules (except rules for safety).

All children have a right to play. In our busy world, where parents and children are rushing from one thing to another, it is essential to make time for children to play.

Developing children's social and emotional skills through play

- ▶ Play is a way children can express their feelings even before they have the words to say how they feel.
- ▶ In play children are in charge of what they do. Being in control in play helps them to learn to manage their feelings.
- ▶ When children make or build things in their play, they are building skills and confidence in themselves.
- ▶ In play children learn about the give and take of relationships with their friends. They learn to lead and follow and to care for others.
- ▶ Play helps children to think about what they want to do, to plan and to be patient.

- ▶ Through play children learn how to mend mistakes and to feel better after things go wrong.
- ▶ Indoor and outdoor play helps to reduce children's stress.
- ▶ Play is a way children make sense of their world and practice for their future—being mummies, daddies and workers.
- ▶ Play is for imagination and creativity. In play you can enjoy magical worlds of joy.
- ▶ Play is something children can own in a world where most things are organised by adults.
- ▶ Play is a time when adults and children can have fun together.
- ▶ Play is for pleasure. You play what you enjoy and you stop when you want to.

Children learn and develop their social and emotional skills though playing on their own, with other children and with adults.



Adults can support children's play

- ▶ By arranging safe places for children to play, indoors and outdoors, in parks and playgrounds.
- ▶ By arranging time for play and not scheduling too much in a child's day.
- ▶ By providing children with some playthings (e.g., dolls, building blocks, playdough, paints.) and also allowing children to find their own playthings both inside and outside (e.g., fabrics, boxes, leaves, gumnuts and puddles).
- ▶ By reading and storytelling with children.
- ▶ By playing with children when invited and stopping when children want to play their own games. Babies communicate through their expressions and body movements whether they want you to play or when they are tired and have had enough.
- ▶ By following the child's lead and resisting the temptation to criticise, direct or turn play into a lesson.

This resource and further information on the national KidsMatter Early Childhood initiative is available to download at www.kidsmatter.edu.au. The KidsMatter Early Childhood team also welcomes your feedback which can be submitted through the website.



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