

My Background

Licensed clinical social worker, treating children with trauma, emotional and behavioral issues for 25 years

Registered Play Therapist Supervisor

Work in outpatient behavioral health, private practice, home-based and school settings with children and caregivers

Provide consultation and supervision on working with children and families to other mental health professionals

Over 10 years of teaching social work students, fully online for over a year

Mom of a teenager who has been learning remotely for over a year

Main Sources

American Academy of Pediatrics (2018) The Power of Play: A Pediatric Role in Enhancing Development in Young Children. Pediatrics, 142(3), 1-16.

Kathleen Glascott Burriss & Ling-Ling Tsao (2002) Review of Research: How Much Do We Know about the Importance of Play in Child Development? Childhood Education, 78(4), 230-233.

Peter Gray (2013) Free to Learn: Why Unleashing the Instinct to Play Will Make Our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant, and Better Students for Life. New York: Basic Books.

Overview

- Theories about play
- Types of play
- Research on benefits of play
- Recommendations for play (in general, with teens, in virtual setting)
- Questions

What is Play?

- Play is...
- Intrinsically motivated
 - Active engagement
 - Joyful discovery
 - Voluntary
 - Fun
 - Spontaneous

Theories of Play

Energy release-primary needs are met by parents, so less energy is needed for survival. Play allows children to burn off their extra energy.

Preparation-practice and perfect skills before they are necessary for survival in adulthood.

Catharsis-play allows children to release negative feelings caused by traumatic events and to substitute them with more pleasant feelings.

Reduce fear and sense of vulnerability-play makes unmanageably big problems feel smaller and manageable.

Theories of Play (cont'd)

Mastery-gaining control of sensory and motor function leads to self esteem and empowerment, mastery of objects and peer social interactions.

Exposure-play exposes the child to new experiences and new physical and mental activities for dealing with the world.

Regulation-play facilitates development of self regulation, abstract thinking, and higher cognitive functioning.

Social- learning and practicing roles and norms, develop social confidence.

Types of Play

Object Play

-Sensorimotor exploration of the object's properties

-Symbolic use of objects for communication, language and abstract thought



Physical, locomotor, rough and tumble play

- Coordination of motor skills
- Risk taking in a relatively safe environment
- Communication, negotiation, emotional balance, emotional intelligence



Outdoor Play

- Child is active participant in motor, cognitive, social and linguistic activities
- Improved sensory integration skills
- Exercise is important for physical health
- More likely to bring together children with diverse backgrounds and develop friendships
- May foster an appreciation of nature and the environment



Social or Pretend Play

Alone: experimenting with roles

With others:

Peers: negotiation, cooperation, language development

Adults: scaffolding, zone of proximal development



Self Directed Play vs Adult Guided Play

"Free play"

Allows child to explore
Understand their interests and
experiences



Adult constructed play with a goal in
mind.

Examples: drum play to facilitate
coregulation, Simon Says to
facilitate impulse control



Benefits of adults playing with children

For the adult:

-Re-experience the joy of their own
childhood

-Rejuvenate themselves

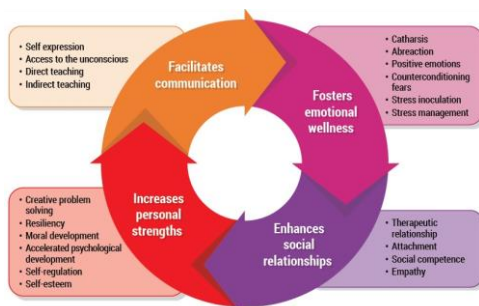


For the relationship between child
and adult:

-Improved communication and
appreciation

-Decrease parental stress

-Enhanced relationship



The 20 therapeutic powers of play. Graphic adapted and reprinted with permission from the Association for Play Therapy, Play Therapy™, 14(3) from the September 2019 issue. Original graphic from Dr. Judi Pearson, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia.

Research on Play and Development

Relationship between type of play materials children are exposed to and ways of problem solving.

Divergent play materials (open ended) may encourage more creativity in and outside of play

More playful boys were more creative and communicative

Pretend play and improved vocabulary vs play with electronic toys

Dramatic play and peer acceptance and social skills

More recess in younger years and more academic success in later years

Children learned more in class after free play recess than structured phys ed

Play and curiosity, which facilitates memory and learning

Play and decreased anxiety

Play and decreased cortisol (stress hormone)

Play and decreased attention difficulties

Experts say that play is important

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child include the right to engage in play

Educators and researchers advocate the importance of play in development and learning

American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that pediatricians advocate for, and prescribe play

Challenges to Play

-Focus on **achievement** makes us prioritize after school enrichment, increased homework, test scores and college acceptance. Depression, anxiety and lack of creativity often results.

-**Parents' increasing work demands** make them less available to encourage play and engage in play.

-Parental guilt and competitiveness leads to overscheduling '**enrichment**'.

-Less **time** for play.

-Schools cut physical education, art, music and recess for **test prep**.

-**Lack of access** to safe neighborhoods and playgrounds.

-**Media (screens)** may encourage more **passivity and consumption** of others' creativity vs active learning and social play, take time away from play.

-**Advertisers and media** mislead parents about developmental benefits (preschoolers who engaged with block play developed better language and cognitive skills than those who watched 'educational' videos).

What you can do to support play

- Understand the importance
- Advocate to prioritize and protect play
- Encourage play in children
- Engage in play with children

Encourage and engage in play

- Value play
- Communicate that play is important
- Make time for play for yourself and for children
- Choose materials that encourage creative play
- Engage in play (Remember there are many types of play: Object play, Physical, locomotor, rough and tumble play, Outdoor play, Social, or pretend play, Self directed play, Adult guided play)
- Ways to start: "I'd like to play with you..." "How do you want to play?" or "I have an idea, let's..."

Regulation

- Regulation: how do I respond to and cope with stressors (sensory, cognitive, interpersonal, environmental) biologically, physically, emotionally, interpersonally
- Regulation starts with INTERACTIVE regulation (adult regulates and soothes)
- Interactive regulation leads to SELF regulation (I can soothe myself)
- Play ideas:
 - Model and teach self regulation through frustration
 - Bubble blowing/Freeze dance/ Simon says/TP roll

Ideas for play with teens

- Coloring in relaxation coloring books
- Style each other's hair
- Riding bikes
- Play Frisbee
- Build Lego
- Play card games
- Board games
- Read together
- Yoga
- Jigsaw puzzles
- Listen to THEIR music together

What about during virtual learning?

- Ice breakers (one thing I look forward to, my favorite song these days, all time favorite movie etc.)
- Playing "catch"
- Freeze dance
- Simon says
- Tell a story together
- Make up a dance together
- Charades
- Memes
- Pictionary
- Bingo
- Group logos, mascots
- Color your heart on paper
- Design a superhero
- Scavenger hunt
- Google search tele play therapy, and parent child tele play therapy (so many resources!)
- GatherTown
- Among Us
- Gimkit
- Kahoot
- Flip grid
- Google slides/ Jamboard

Ways to learn more

National Association for the Education of Young Children <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/play>

American Academy of Pediatrics paper on the power of play
<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/142/3/e20182058>

Zero to Three <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1081-tips-on-playing-with-babies-and-toddlers>

HelpGuide The benefits of play for adults <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/benefits-of-play-for-adults.htm>

Google search "ideas for play" or "how to play with my..."

Association for Play Therapy <https://www.a4pt.org/page/WhyPlayTherapy>

[The Influence of Play Therapy on Classroom Management](#)

Amazon, Google, and Pinterest

[Webinars and resources on using Roblox, Fortnite, Minecraft, Animal Crossing and Lego in therapy.](#)

What can I do now?

- Make a commitment that is realistic for you
- Start small
- Maybe just 10 minutes
- Work up to a regular schedule

Keep in touch with me

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on Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/colleentheplaytherapist/>

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Thank you for
your time!

What
questions do
you have?
