

The Power of Parents in Play

“Play with me Mommy?” Parents may answer this request with a “Maybe later” or “How about you turn on a show?” Parents lead busy lives with work, bill payments, laundry, dinner preparation etc. Finding time to play with your child can be difficult. Play may seem like “child’s work”, but when parents play with their children they can help develop many skills including:



TURN TAKING – Having a conversation requires the ability to take turns. Play helps a child practise this skill. Parents can teach turn taking through activities such as building a tower together or taking turns driving a car down a ramp.

INTRODUCING NEW WAYS TO PLAY – Left to their own, a child may get “stuck” in a play routine. A parent can help by following their child’s lead and adding a new step to the play. For example, if a child is putting pretend food in a pot and stirring – a parent can show their child a new step of feeding the food to a doll or a stuffed animal.



LEARNING NEW WORDS – As parents play with their children, they can model new words including concepts, action words and nouns. Parents can talk about what is happening and this provides children with a language-rich play environment.

MAKING CHOICES – The ability to make choices helps children be independent. Through play, parents can model choices and encourage their child to respond. For example, “Should the car drive over the bridge or through the tunnel?”



RECOGNIZING AND LABELING EMOTIONS – Play creates an excellent environment to practice and act out emotions. By first practicing these emotions with their parents, a child is better prepared to respond to different emotions with their peers.

There are many educational shows and apps dedicated to entertain and teach children, but there is no replacement for the power of parent interaction in play.