

## Bear in mind that every child develops at a unique pace.

Every child is different. Children have a world of their own. What a child can do easily can be quite challenging for another, and each child has a distinctive learning pace and a preferred learning method. It is paramount to try to discover the child's interests and specific characteristics, and to let the child engage in self-discovery. It is also very important to provide opportunities for the development of the child's interests and skills, or pursuits.

Refrain from making comparisons between children based on the games they play. Do not attempt to correct mistakes children make while playing, and do not try to perform some tasks in games on behalf of your child. It is not your duty to perform, and it will also make your child feel bad. Let your child develop at their own pace and in line with their own skills, and give them time.

What children play also helps identifying their areas of interest. For instance, parents of a child, who has discovered that s/he has an interest in repairing cars, can support the child by providing further such opportunities. Likewise, when a child develops an interest in cooking or making desserts, it is possible to support this interest of hers/his as well as the development of her/his skills in this regard.

## Communication is key

It is inevitable that subject matter of what children play reflects their current situation. Play can be one of the instruments children utilize to be able to cope with a situation that they are unable to make sense of, or that is challenging for them. Children can make an unpleasant or troublesome moment they had the subject matter of their play, and they strive to come up with solutions that help them overcome a difficult situation by developing different scenarios about that subject. The subject matter your child prefers for her/his play can also help you better understand her/him.

If you notice that your child is playing games that you find bizarre, or that are unpleasant, difficult or not age-appropriate, have a talk with her/him after such games. You can ask how s/he is and how s/he is feeling, and then you can help her/him if there is anything that confuses or bothers her/him. Inform her/him in an age-appropriate way so that s/he can better understand the situation at hand; provide realistic, honest and easily understandable answers to any questions s/he may have. This way, you can put her/his mind at ease and help her/him feel safe.

## You can play together as well

You can play together with your child, or even join in her/his game. You can tell your child fairy tales, ask her/him riddles, or teach her/him the games you played in your own childhood. Thus, you can have a pleasant time with your child.

Moreover, if your child wants to play together, s/he can invite you to join in. In such cases, you can join in your child's game and play together. When you join in your child's play, it is important to try to figure out what the scenario is and to play the role your child ask of you; you can focus on having fun together instead of saying things like "This is not how it is done, this is ridiculous" or trying to play it quickly to get over with it.

## Playing together with your child;

- ✕ helps strengthen the bond between you and your child,
- ✕ provides you with the opportunity to expand your knowledge of the child's inner world,
- ✕ makes your child feel safe,
- ✕ helps you identify which areas s/he is successful in and which areas s/he needs help with,
- ✕ helps you have an idea about what s/he likes or dislikes to do, and
- ✕ enables you to see how s/he manifests her/his emotions.

## Beware of Online and Virtual Games!

Today, with the developing computer technology and social media becoming an integral part of our lives, online games have become highly popular. In this regard, it is observed that children can access some content that might have harmful effects on them. It is undoubted that there are some educational and useful games played online or on computer. There are games that can help them improve their thinking and planning skills, including language learning, which can support their future success.

It is highly important that you monitor what kind of sources your child accesses and what type of content s/he follows when playing these types of games. You can set boundaries with regard to playing online games that are violent and unsuitable for children, and age ratings of which are suitable for an older adolescent audience or for adults. Monitoring the time your child spends in front of the screen when playing such games and making sure that it is not too long are important for the mental health and psychological development of the child.

**If you want to benefit from our mental health services, you can apply to the nearest ASAM office for further information. Sessions are held free of charge and in accordance with the principle of confidentiality.**



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## IMPORTANCE OF PLAY FOR CHILDREN

*"Birds fly, fish swim, and children play."*

*Garry Landreth*

**Play is a child's way of learning and communication.  
In other words, PLAY is children's language!**

Through play, children express their emotions, ask questions, relate to their environment and learn about life. Play is a tool through which children make sense of their experiences by actively using their imagination.

Playing also helps children express themselves and establish communication with us.

Play is an integral part of a happy and healthy child development.

It substantially enables the development of curiosity and learning ability.



Kingdom of the Netherlands



Admittedly, helping with the care of siblings and house chores is key for a child's development. Contributing to domestic life also supports children's learning and upbringing. Besides, allocating special time to play, especially for children under the age of 12, is essential for their psychological and physical health. However, when the task of baby-sitting siblings is given to the eldest sibling, for example, an 8 year-old, that child will not be able to have the healthy space s/he needs for her/his development. We should always remember that children are just children, and they need a healthy development process to grow into adults.

Children, who can play, can do so because they feel safe. Children, who are in an environment of love, respect and trust, can play.



***Play is not a waste of time!***

## Why is play important?

### Playing games;

- ✦ helps children develop reasoning and problem-solving skills,
- ✦ helps the development of their language, speaking and communication skills,
- ✦ improves their comprehension skills through imaginary scenarios,
- ✦ improves their short-term and long-term memory, and facilitates their learning process,
- ✦ contributes to their physical development. Engaging in some games strengthens various muscle groups of children,
- ✦ enables children to develop a higher level of self-expression ability,
- ✦ helps children recognize their emotions and develop mechanisms to cope with challenging emotions, and
- ✦ helps the strengthening of their hand-eye coordination, helps them control their movements, and promotes balance and muscle development.

## How can you support your child's play?

Children should be provided with playtime and safe playgrounds.

You can clear out a space where your child can play. Especially for young children, you can set up a playground at home by, for example, laying a blanket on the floor, where they can freely play without the fear of getting things dirty. There may be times where a child wants to play alone, respect her/his choice. You can designate areas for your child to play in different sections of the house, and you can show her/him a space by saying, "Come, play here," or "Here is your playground now". You can point out the spaces where the child can play while in the kitchen, living room or any other room by laying a blanket or a cloth on the floor.

***The right to play is a basic child right!***

### Remember that any household item can be used for plays.

You may be thinking that toys or various game tools are required for playing games. However, children have a much richer imagination than we would think they do. Having expensive toys or specific materials is not the basic requirement for being able to play. Games are created through imagination and making up stories. On the other hand, toys can also be produced from paper or cloth.

When building a game to play, anything can be a play material for children. Spoons, wooden spoons, clothespins, fabrics, balls of yarn, boxes, old bedsheets, or chickpea and rice on a tray can represent children's imaginary houses, dolls, and even space crafts. In a child's play, pebbles stuffed into a plastic bottle can turn into a treasure, or a headscarf wrapped around the belly can turn into a smart dress.

Children can also play games with the help of facial expressions, with their bodies, or by telling stories or talking.

Remember: It is crucial to ensure that play materials used by children are items that would not prick their hands, or break or shatter under impact. Sharp-edged and pointy objects or materials that are too heavy to lift off the ground should not be used as play materials. Make it a rule that high-value items, either materially or spiritually, cannot be used as toys. Bear in mind that young children, in particular, are at risk of swallowing items we give them, such as beads. Pay attention to what your very young children are playing with, and even make sure that you accompany them when they are playing.

## Stay calm when your child plays noisy games or games that make things untidy.

Playing games can sometimes involve noisiness or untidiness. Especially if a child cannot go out and constantly spends time at home for some reason, the likelihood of noisiness and untidiness will increase. It is important to permit a certain level of noisiness and untidiness for children's play, which is also tolerable by neighbors. If you are of the opinion that such plays cause disturbance to neighbors, it might be helpful to inform your neighbors by saying, "We have children at home, we are very sorry if the noise disturbs you". Some people might be more understanding when they find out that children cause the noise. Others, on the other hand, might want no noise to be made after a certain hour of the day. It is important that both parties are aware of the situation and act tolerant towards one another.

Children's plays can be different from each other; some plays can involve a lot of noise while others can be played in silence. If your child is old enough, you can set playtimes together, and it is crucial for the child to realize that noise can disturb others. If the game played is a noisy one, or one causing untidiness to some degree, you should tell your child that it should not be played in the evening after a certain time, for example, when her/his sibling is sleeping, when there are guests in the house, or when someone is sick at home.

### Playing outdoors

Playing outdoors is also important for children's health and development. If you reside in a place where your child can go out and play safely with her/his friends, you can let your child go out, and you can even encourage outdoor play.

When your child is playing outside: It is crucial to set certain rules and keep things under control, such as playing with peers only, not going far from home when unsupervised, always informing parents if s/he plans to go a little far from home with her/his friends, coming back home when called, always hurrying to parents and informing them when faced with a problem. It is important that children wear comfortable clothing, which would allow them to enjoy playing comfortably outside, which may be old but comfortable at the same time, and which they would not be afraid of getting dirty or damaged. School clothes or stylish outfits for special occasions are not suitable for playing outside.

### Furthermore;

- ✦ what time s/he should come home at the latest,
- ✦ that s/he should never talk to or even approach to strangers, and
- ✦ that playground should be a place somewhere safe should be clearly established with the child.