

Booklet 3: Play

Headlines:

- Playing offers the opportunity for children to develop creativity, cognitive abilities, and physical and emotional health.
- Playing in different ways helps different skill sets to grow.
- A growth mindset is a key concept.
- Having a growth mindset encourages children to learn and develop from mistakes made during development.

Importance of play

Play is described as engaging in a variety of activities for enjoyment and recreation. Whilst playing used to be thought of as just for children and a sign of immaturity, it is now seen as valuable for adults (Whitebread et al., 2012), and a critical part of child development.

Playing allows children to express themselves creatively, whilst developing their physical, cognitive, and emotional dexterity (Burriss & Tsao, 2002). Playing has also been linked with better health (Koukourikos et al., 2015), immunity, and brain development (Yogman et al., 2018), and also promotes improved emotional development and parent-child relationships (Ginsburg et al., 2007).



Importance of variety

Allowing children to engage in a range of different types of play (e.g. physical, imaginative, competitive, unstructured) teaches a variety of different skill sets, as mentioned previously. Playing can have different social demands because children practice playing with different types of people. For example, playing can be done alone, alongside other children, or when children are with their family.

Engaging in a variety of play provides opportunities for children to learn how to interact with others and begin to foster social skills, such as controlling aggression (Trajković et al., 2020), necessary for effective and positive human interaction. Through play, children learn more about others and themselves.

Importance of making mistakes

Growing up, mistakes are inevitable. Making errors can make us feel disappointed or a failure but even so, there is lots of evidence that shows the benefits of making mistakes as they can lead to learning and growth (Boaler, 2016).

Dweck (2015) has proposed a theory that people have one of two potential mindsets, namely: “fixed” and “growth”.

The **fixed mindset** is when we believe that our abilities are fixed and no amount of practice can change that.

The **growth mindset** is when we believe basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work.

The type of mindset held at any particular time impacts learning experiences and how individuals choose to react to their mistakes. It could be the difference between thinking, ‘I am not good at science so there’s not much point in concentrating’ or ‘I would like to be better at science so maybe I should listen extra carefully or ask the teacher if I am unsure’.

A **fixed mindset** can be detrimental and limit growth in children as a mistake is seen as proof they are unable to do something, and nothing can be done about that.

A **growth mindset** enables the child to see a mistake as an opportunity to learn and make changes in order to adjust any potential future outcomes, which mitigates feelings of failure and discourages the need to give up. Believing that they can improve allows the child to face problems and activate change, and thus continuously better their skills.

Useful links

- https://youtu.be/KUWn_TJTrnU
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnH4ljen7OI>

Booklet 3: Encouragement versus praise

Headlines:

- Encouragement refers to providing another individual support.
- Praise refers to expressions of approval or admiration for something someone has been done.
- Encouragement is associated with better outcomes (e.g. higher self-esteem and motivation) in children compared to praise.

Parents seeking to praise or encourage their children are each coming from a good place. However, a culture of just praise can lead to children being dependent on others' opinions (Bayat, 2011; Kelsey, 2011). Some even suggest that praise can undermine children's motivation (e.g., Mizokawa, 2018) as they become driven by the external experience of being praised by another person.

When praise is inflated for high accomplishment, it can lead to children only feeling worthy when they hit that high standard. Praise given in this way can negatively impact children's self-esteem and can also lead to a child becoming self-centered (narcissistic) (Brummelman et al., 2017).

Encouragement is different to praise because it helps children focus on the process rather than the outcome, and helps children to appreciate their behaviour and achievements. Encouragement also invites self-evaluation (Mestre et al., 2018; Olaguez et al., 2018; Wong et al., 2019). Children are able to learn how to avoid detrimental levels of comparison or competition (Hitz & Driscoll, 1988).

Different ways to encourage	Examples
Notice what you see	It sounds as though you've been helping mum with your brother.
	You are so much faster at tying your shoelaces than last week!
	You've eaten all your pasta.
Notice positive values	It was really kind to stay with your friend at lunchtime when they were sick.
	It was generous of you to share your chocolate with your brother.
Describe what you see	I can see you've started to clear up your bricks.
	I'm seeing such a big improvement when you sound out tricky words when you're reading
	You're trying so hard with your handwriting at the moment.
Be thankful	Thank you so much for coming with me to walk the dog!
	It makes such a difference when you hang up your wet towel, it will be dry when you need it tomorrow!
	Thank you for helping tidy up the toys, now we can go to the park.

Different ways to encourage	Examples
<p style="text-align: center;">Ask questions</p>	What do you need to do next?
	How did you feel when you were running so fast in that race?
	What was it like to go on the big slide?
<p style="text-align: center;">Keep it real</p>	You are really trying hard to tidy up but the pencils rolled everywhere! Do you need any help as it's such a big job?

Useful links

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMDn8U0Mnbc>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3hyvI84KaE>
- <https://www.continued.com/early-childhood-education/ask-the-experts/what-difference-between-praise-and-23704>
- <https://www.continued.com/early-childhood-education/ask-the-experts/what-difference-between-praise-and-23704>

Booklet 3: Listening and communication skills between parent and child

Listening is about being able to understand what others are trying to communicate to you.

Active listening is a type of deeper listening that notices body language, tone of voice, and other non-verbal “cues” (or clues!).

Listening describes receiving and understanding messages accurately. It is the key to communication between parents and their children. Listening and understanding well develops trust. Using your body (e.g. nodding, eye contact) as well as your voice helps to build connection and shows others you understand their concerns (Davies, 2014). When parents listen and communicate actively children feel heard and understood, which boosts wellbeing in both children and parents (Lancaster & Kirby, 2010).

In 1986, Graybill investigated the impact of training parents in active listening. His results suggested a decrease in anxiety in adults and improved confidence in responding to their children’s feelings. Interestingly, Graybill was not able to prove that positive changes in children’s behaviours or attitudes were directly linked to being listened to.

More recent evidence has suggested other benefits for children when they are being listened to well, such as improved learning (e.g. Artut, 2009; Smith, 2006), social and emotional growth (Doveston, 2007), and stronger relationships in their families (Westerfield, 2020).



Useful links

- <https://centerforparentingeducation.org/library-of-articles/healthy-communication/the-skill-of-listening/>
- <https://youtu.be/KC8SGofBTf0>
- <https://youtu.be/5f7GfbmN5aw>
- <https://youtu.be/RSpKaWE8prM>
- <https://youtu.be/q5viyKoCikI>
- https://www.naturalchild.org/articles/robin_grille/rewards_praise.html
- https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=BMSIj_nDfulC&oi=fnd&pg=PR11&dq=listening+and+communication+skills+between+parent+and+child&ots=Pmb8qFir6P&sig=4-3iKyOoqyGQQ6iXZFqHD5cSSGI&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

References for whole of Session 3

All references used in this booklet can be found in the separate ‘References Booklet’.

Selected references:

- Burriss, K. G., & Tsao, L. L. (2002). Review of research: How much do we know about the importance of play in child development?. *Childhood Education*, 78(4), 230-233.
- Brummelman, E., Nelemans, S. A., Thomaes, S., & Orobio de Castro, B. (2017). When parents’ praise inflates, children’s self-esteem deflates. *Child development*, 88(6), 1799-1809.
- Graybill, D. (1986). A multiple-outcome evaluation of training parents in active listening. *Psychological Reports*, 59(3), 1171-1185.