

Nurturing Play

Nurturing play is play that helps the child feel loved and valued. It supports them to recognise that it is safe to seek comfort from you and that you are caring and responsive. This type of play reinforces the message that your child is worthy of care and that you will provide care unconditionally.

Tips:

- ◆ Remember to nurture and care for yourself.
- ◆ Remember the basic care tasks are important e.g. making meals, tending to a grazed knee, going clothes shopping.
- ◆ Notice, label and meet your child's needs. e.g. "You look cold, lets put the heating on"
- ◆ Attuning to your child's needs takes time. Sometimes you will get it wrong.
- ◆ Know and respect your child's responses to touch and where their limits lie.

Example Activities

- ◆ Cotton ball or feather: while closing their eyes your child guesses if you touched their hand with a cotton ball or feather.
- ◆ Do hand or footprint paint activities and gently wash and dry your child's feet afterwards.
- ◆ Trace letters/shapes on each others backs and try to guess what it is.



Engaging Play

Engaging play is play that will help you and your child be in the moment together. Through it you develop the emotional connection with your child. It helps to build their self esteem and self worth. You can surprise and entice your child into enjoying new experiences.

Tips:

- ◆ Notice things about your child. How do they respond to engagement and touch?
- ◆ Avoid tickling.
- ◆ Be aware of your own responses.
- ◆ Set up things like special handshakes and greetings
- ◆ Set the pace and remain in control.
- ◆ Have fun (most important).
- ◆ Be attentive and respond to your child's positive and negative emotions.

Example activities:

- ◆ Tell them you have noticed things about them e.g. freckles, clothes, mannerisms.
- ◆ Play simple games e.g. hide and seek, peek-a-boo, rhythmic games and sensory activities.
- ◆ Copying each others funny faces (mirroring).

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Theraplay® informed parenting:

Ideas for Play

**Adoption
Psychology
Service**

Dr Sarah McIntosh
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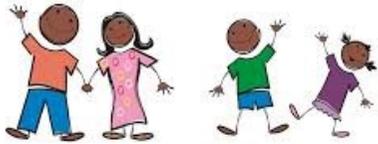


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Types of Play

- ◆ Play that engages
- ◆ Play that creates structure
- ◆ Play that nurtures
- ◆ Play that creates challenge



Structured Play

Structured play is play that will help your child feel secure. It supports them to recognise that you are reliable and predictable.

During this play, you act as a leader guiding your child to have control over their body.

Tips:

- ◆ Keep activities positive.
- ◆ Use simple language and avoid questions
- ◆ Give “First, Next, Later” instructions.
- ◆ Give clear and specific instructions.
- ◆ Avoid bribes and consequences.
- ◆ Use specific repeated phrases.
- ◆ Use gentle touch and hand signals to guide your child.
- ◆ Help them to complete the task if they are finding it challenging.

Structured Play Continued

Example games:

- ◆ **Blanket Run:** one parent lifts up a small blanket from the floor for your child to run under towards the other parent.
- ◆ **Follow the leader:** stand in a conga line position with your child at the back. Move in a particular way and have your child copy.
- ◆ **Pop the bubble:** blow a bubble and ask your child to pop it with a particular body part or in a particular way.



Challenging Play

Challenging play is play that will support your child to embrace new experiences and build confidence and resilience.

It is important that challenging play is pitched at the right level and that you provide support and encourage your child during the process.

Challenging Play Continued

Tips:

- ◆ Celebrate small successes.
- ◆ To pitch challenge correctly think about what your child can do and add a little extra step.
- ◆ To get to know your child’s limits observe their physical and emotional responses e.g. are they anxious? are they over excited?
- ◆ If your child is finding it difficult you can break down the task or do it with them. Don’t do it for them.
- ◆ Be careful with competition. Too much can create stress and a dip in confidence.

Example games:

- ◆ **Balloon tennis:** keep it up in the air and set challenges to do it with different body parts.
- ◆ **Co operative races:** take it in turns to blow a ping pong ball across a room and see how quickly you can do it.
- ◆ **Ball pass:** gently roll a ball to and fro when sitting or standing close together. You can make it more challenging by moving further apart or changing speed of the roll.

