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Encouraging Play Encourages a Child's Development

We've all heard the term, "Oh, that's child's play." It implies something is easy, frivolous and unimportant in the overall scheme of things. But to a child, child's play is essential to their mental, social, emotional, and physical development.

We all know that children like to play. But what we may not know is the importance of play in a child's life. Play is essential to every area of a child's growth and development.

Play provides a means for energy to be put to use. It strengthens and refines small and large motor skills, and it builds stamina and strength. Sensory learning develops mostly through play. Play is significant to physical development in that without it the body could not grow and develop normally.

Children possess a natural curiosity. They, explore, learn and make sense out of their environment by playing. Parents and educators alike can support this learning activity by ensuring age-appropriate toys, materials and environments are available to the child.

Play enables children to know things about the world and to discover information essential to learning. Through play children learn basic concepts such as colors, counting, how to build things, and how to solve problems. Thinking and reasoning skills are at work every time a child engages in some type of play.

Children learn to relate to one another, negotiate roles, share, and obey rules through play. They also learn how to belong to a group and how to be part of a team. A child obtains and retains friends through play.

Play fulfills many needs including a sense of accomplishment, successfully giving and receiving attention, and the need for self-esteem. It helps them develop a strong sense of self, and is emotionally satisfying to them. They learn about fairness, and through pretending learn appropriate ways of expressing emotion such as anger, fear, frustration, stress and discover ways of dealing with these feelings.

So encourage your child's play. Color pictures, make finger paintings, build buildings and imaginary cities with blocks, and built a tent in the middle of the living room and go camping! And as we all know, childhood is fleeting, so let them enjoy being a kid while they are one!