

Connecting with your kids through play

"Play is the purest expression of love"



Why Play?

"Play allows parents to enter a child's world, on the child's terms, in order to foster closeness, confidence and connection. The more we join them in their world, the more cooperative they will be when we drag them along to ours."

*-Lawrence Cohen, Playful Parenting**

All mammals play to adulthood except human beings. Play is essential to human growth, development, learning, and cultivating relationships. Play is children's first language. Children use play/activity to communicate their thoughts and feelings. Just as adults use words to communicate, children use play. Children also use play to reveal and cope with problems through play.

For children, play is a natural process that:

-  Express feelings and regulate emotions
-  Fosters bonding and acceptable behavior
-  Promotes creativity and problem-solving
-  Build up trust and mastery
-  Encourages learning and open communication

Some tips for playing with your child

#1: Making diligent pause from whatever you're doing – to play:

Set a timer, either for half an hour or an hour. During this time, give your child full attention – no phone calls, no messaging, no house chaos. Change yourself into play clothes. Be silly along with them and have fun. Avoid over-stimulation. Know when it is time to stop.

At The Genesis Therapy Center we believe in a holistic approach to patient care – healing and growth taking place through body, mind and spirit. Genesis is founded on the principle of commitment to affordable, accessible, skilled and respectful service to all. In that spirit, please freely disseminate this resource to all that might benefit from its content.



#2: Entering world of a child

Show genuine interests in what your child does and what he/she has to say. Take cues from what interests your child and follow his/her lead. For children, play means that every pot and pan in the kitchen can be a musical instrument and every rock in the yard can be a pirate ship.

#3: Find non-verbal ways to communicate

Getting immersed in non-verbal play together is a great way to connect your child to a deeper level. Activities like: dance to music, play sports, watch animals, take photos, read, go for a walk, go fishing, build model airplane.

#4: Rediscovering the Joy of Play

Give yourself patience and time to rediscover the joy of playing with your child. While it's hard to relax and give yourself over to play at the beginning, view this time with your children as a moment of bonding.

More ideas:

- Play outdoors. Throw balls. Make mud pies. Go on a hike around the neighborhood. Take a nature walk in your backyard.
- Play games – card games – board games – silly and wacky kids' games. Help them learn to take turns, how to handle win and lose a game. Praise them. Encourage them. Laugh with them.
- Get involved in a craft project together. Build a pet house with cardboard. Bake cookies share with friends. Paint a family picture.
- Make music together. Sing along. Dance along.
- Read a book and make up stories. Ask questions. Encourage them to make up a story based on the book.

References and resources about connecting with kids through play

- ✚ *Playful Parenting: An Exciting New Approach to Raising Children That Will Help You Nurture Close Connections, Solve Behavior Problems, and Encourage Confidence* by Lawrence J. Cohen
- ✚ <http://www.handinhandparenting.org>
- ✚ <https://childdevelopmentinfo.com>
- ✚ *Building Healthy Minds: The Six Experiences That Create Intelligence and Emotional Growth in Babies and Young Children*, by Stanley Greenspan, M.D., Perseus Publishing, 2000. Emphasizes the importance of parent-child play in a child's development.
- ✚ *Make Your Own Preschool Games*, by Sally Goldberg, Ph.D., Perseus Publishing, 2002.

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