

5 ESSENTIALS OF MEANINGFUL PLAY



Memories of joyful and meaningful play experiences can bind families together emotionally, even long after the kids have grown up. These five essential elements of play outline why play provides kids with rich experiences that create these lasting memories.

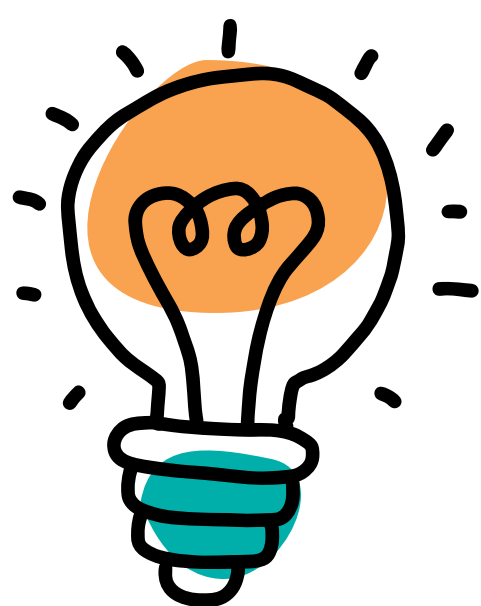


MAKING DECISIONS

When kids choose how to play for themselves, they experience freedom in making those choices. The types of toys or materials offered can help kids make more meaningful decisions: offering open-ended materials or taking kids outside can encourage creativity in many ways.

INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

The impulse to play comes from a natural desire to understand the world. It's this intrinsic motivation that allows kids to regulate their own feelings in order to keep playing, because kids eventually find it more important to be a part of the play with their friends than to satisfy their own wants and needs at that moment. Through play, kids learn self-control.

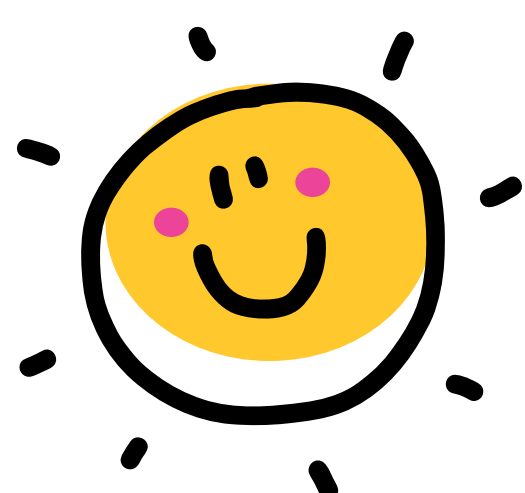


IN THE MOMENT

In true play, kids are so fully engaged they lose awareness of their surroundings, time, and space (though they can recognize reality versus fantasy). In this risk-free atmosphere where reality is suspended, kids have the security and safety they need to experiment, try new ideas, and investigate the laws of nature.

SPONTANEITY OVER PLANNING

Often, play is totally unplanned. Or play is planned but, impulsively, kids will make changes. Maybe someone changes their mind or perhaps a toy doesn't cooperate, so the play adapts. This sense of the unknown gives kids opportunities to develop flexibility in their thinking and decision making.



PLAY IS ENJOYABLE

There is always an emotional response attached to play. Without this emotional connection, the experience is simply an activity, not PLAY. Enjoyment is the direct result of engaging in play – it's fun!