



The Importance Of Children's Play And Creativity

Play is very important for young children because it is the primary way they learn about themselves and the world.

There are two kinds of play. Children learn different things from each.

1

In some types of play, like sports or video games, or coloring in a coloring book, adults make the rules. Children learn things like teamwork, good sportsmanship, how to follow instructions and develop strategies.



In a typical day, young children do not have many chances to be in control and make decisions, so they need lots of time for "self-directed" play. Pretend play is about the process of doing, not an end product.

2

In "self-directed" (sometimes called "pretend") play, children direct the action. When children control their own play they:

Have a chance to try out different roles

– As they create stories and scenes, they can become whatever characters they choose. For example, in a game of "house", they might try being the parent, the oldest child, the visiting neighbor, or even the family dog!

Learn at their own rate

– Children choose when to repeat or practice and when to move on to something new.

Feel powerful

– In pretend play, children can have any power they can imagine. Like a superhero, they can be strong, or fly, or make it stop raining.

Work through feelings

– Children can re-enact things that bothered them and change what happens, or let themselves be angry without hurting anyone. They can use play as a physical release or they can use play to transform stress into a game (like creating a hunting game by losing their coat when it is time to leave and they would rather stay).

Develop imagination

– Children can create their own stories, characters, and games. They can make their own pictures instead of coloring in something that someone else has drawn.

Sometimes when we think about "creativity" we think about art and artists. Indeed, art, music, and drama are important creative expressions. But imagination and creativity are important for everyone. Whether we are scientists, business managers, peace negotiators, or parents, everyone who needs to solve problems relies on well-developed imaginations and creative thinking.

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