The Importance of Play in Early Childhood Development

Ruth Vonderhoe Extension Educator

Have you ever laughed until your sides ached? Well, if it has been awhile take time to play with your children. Give yourself permission to have a wonderful experience listening and laughing with each child.

In today’s world of trying to balance work and home schedules, parents find it hard to spend quality time with their children. It is essential for parents to make the best use of the time they have with their children. Your child needs time to be with you to relax and play.

“When is a ask me what I did in school today and I say, ‘I just played.’ Please don’t misunderstand me. You see, I am learning as I play. I am learning to enjoy and be successful in my work. Today I am a child and my play is work.”—Anita Wadley, 1974

Lots of playing with children builds lasting bonds. Playing allows parents to appreciate the uniqueness of each child. Playing with your children can be a stress reducer. Laughing and relaxing are important to your own well-being as well as your children.

Keep in mind parents are their children’s first and favorite playmates. From the very beginning of your child’s life, she is engaging in play with you, whether following your face as you move it slowly from one side to the other or listening to your voice as you sing to her during a diaper change. Children love it when you are “silly” with them in play, and learn social skills by playing in play, and learn social skills by when you are “silly” with them in play, and learn social skills by when you are “silly” with them in play, and learn social skills by when you are “silly” with them in play, and learn social skills by when you are “silly” with them in play.

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