

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PLAY IN PROMOTING CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND STRONG PARENT-CHILD BONDS

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ABSTRACT

Play is essential for the overall development of the child as it contributes to cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being. Engaging children in various play activities, relationships and experiences from conception to age two lays the foundation to the essential brain connections. More than one million brain connections are formed per second at this time. It is also a period which offers an ideal opportunity for parents to engage fully with their children. Despite the proved benefits derived from play for both children and parents, time for free play has been remarkably reduced for some children. This paper addresses a variety of factors that have contributed to reducing play activities in early childhood. They include a hurried parental lifestyle, changes in family structure, increased attention to academics and enrichment activities at the expense of recess or free play. It also offers recommendations on how early years' educators and caregivers can advocate for children by helping families, school systems, and communities consider how best to ensure that play is infused in everyday routine of the child as well as how to seek the balance in children's lives by creating the optimal developmental milieu.

Keywords: Early childhood, optimal development, play activities, parents, family bonds.