



Constructive Play Ideas

Having a child is one of the most exciting and terrifying times in your life. Exciting, as you know you are shaping a new life and terrifying as you start to doubt your abilities as a parent. I am sure most of you can relate to this. I have this theory that as we conceive, this huge amount of guilt and worry enters our body, never to leave us again. As a parent we watch our children grow and we worry about them getting sick, having enough to eat, not even to mention developing those little minds. A friend once told me guilt and worries are like riding a stationary bike. It gets you no where!

Children grow up in spite of us and almost all of them turn out to be okay in the end. There is so much pressure to do the right things, attend the right groups and making sure your toddler will be equipped to deal with the big wide world out there, that I am not sure how modern day parents cope.

Our philosophy is to keep it simple, use what you have available and make everyday things learning experiences. So let's put guilt and worry aside and concentrate on what we can do to make things happen.

LOVE

One of the most important things that you can do is to love your child unconditionally. Nothing helps a child build self esteem more than knowing that they are accepted and are okay. Believe me those terrible two's will come and test the limits of unconditional love. Many a parent has confessed that they could sell their tantruming toddler - only to fall head over heels in love again when the little monster is asleep. Who can resist those angelic faces?

Gym Ball

The Gym ball is great for balance and core muscle development. You have to use a 30cm ball for toddlers under the age of 4 years as the toddlers legs have to be at a 90 ° angle when they sit on the ball. This is one of the most wonderful activities for balance and near sensory stimulation.

How to use the ball:

When listening to a story or watching that one episode of Barney. Let your toddler sit on the ball instead of slouching on a chair. This engages core muscles and forces them to concentrate on not falling off balance.

Any type of movement on the ball will strengthen core and back muscles and stimulate balance. You are limited by your imagination here. They can clap hands touch toes, rock and roll on the ball. I call these bikini and six pack exercises as any mom who has done Pilates will know - staying on the ball works those muscles!

Hiding toys in play dough

You will need play dough and small plastic animals. Hide the animals in the play dough and ask: "now where did he go?" - they must pull off the dough to find the animal. Great for those little fingers. To increase the challenge, have some balls with no animals hiding in them. Squeezing strengthens the tactile decimation and proprioception. Pulling the dough off improves motor planning, fine motor skills and bilateral coordination. Looking for the object improves attention.

Water play

Hot summer days are great for these activities.

Sponges in water

Have ready - a bucket with water and sponges. Take all their clothes off. Draw a target with chalk on an outside wall. Let them throw the sponges at the target . This is great for hand eye co - ordination as well as tactile stimulation. Water play lets them explore different concepts like full / empty, sink / float, wet, cold and warm. For the brave mom - mixing sand into the water can be lots of fun for the toddler.

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