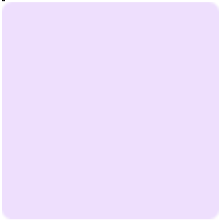




# Pearls for Parents

FRC Bi-weekly Newsletter  
October 16, 2009



## Parenting Pearl #1: *Something to ponder...*

### **The Importance of Play**

Play is the essence of childhood. It allows children to become dreamers, creators, and artists. Play is also essential for children to learn. Unfortunately kids have lost 8 hours per week of free play over the last two decades. Today children are involved in organized sports at an early age. Free time is usually spent in front of the tv or other screens. Their schedules are full of activities, outings, play dates, and classes. There is not as much time for the free, unstructured, and spontaneous play that kids used to have. So how do we make playtime a priority for our children when life is so busy?

In his book, Power of Play, David Elkind suggests that one way parents can help children develop lifelong habits of play is to share their personal passions with their kids. "Children are blessed when we have passions that we can share with them. While they may not take them up, they have the opportunity to see us engaged in something we love and do for no other reason than the sheer pleasure of doing it...Sharing our passions, even by example, is far different from teaching children academic skills or giving them lessons. It amounts to revealing ourselves as people, the things we love to do when we have free time. When we share or model our passions, we free our children to engage in activities they are not obliged to perform (play). In addition, sharing passions builds strong family bonds (love) and teaches socially valuable skills (work)...When we adults unite play, love, and work in our lives, we set an example that our children can follow. That just might be the best way to bring play back into the lives of our children- and build a more playful culture."

Benjamin Franklin once said that we do not stop playing when we get old, but we get old because we stop playing. When was the last time you really played?

## Parenting Pearl #2: *Something to do...*

Here are a couple of ways to facilitate unstructured, spontaneous play and allow children to use their imagination and creativity:

### **Water and Sand Play**

Children can use common household objects to play with either water or sand for hours of unstructured play:

**Ideas:** egg beaters, funnels, ladles, paintbrushes, sponges, spray bottles, measuring cups and spoons, colanders, plastic bottles, dolls, cars, other plastic toys, etc.

Add soap to the water and your children can play with bubbles as well

#### **Too cold to play outside?**

Play with water in the sink or bathtub!

#### **Sand too messy?**

Use uncooked rice, puffed wheat cereal or beans (**hint:** use a plastic bin with a lid and you can store it until they want to play again)

**You can even color the rice:** put rice in a plastic bin. Add either liquid watercolors or food coloring to the rice and mix it all around until all the rice is colored. (**hint:** have children wear gloves when mixing the rice with the different colors)

### **Shaving Cream Play**

This may be messy but common household objects can also be used with shaving cream for hours of fun. Here are some ideas:

**Fingerpainting:** put butcher paper or plastic tablecloth on table. Put mounds of shaving cream with different colors (with watercolor paint or food coloring) on the paper. Have children fingerpaint with shaving cream and mix the different colors.

**Glue and Shaving Cream:** pour 2 cups of glue in a plastic tub. Children can add and mix shaving cream to the glue. Color if desired (with watercolor or food coloring). squish it all around.

**Shaving Cream and Water:** fill a clear large container with water. On top of the water put shaving cream. drip primary colors onto the shaving cream.

**Shaving Cream and block building:** put a plastic tablecloth or sheet on the table. Your children can use small blocks, craft sticks and a can or two of shaving cream to create and build different things.

(recipe source: from the *Ooey Gooey Lady*, Lisa Murphy)

## Staff Spotlight



**Jill Stevens**  
Play Pals Teacher

**I've been working at the  
Children's Center for:  
9 years**

**My Fun Fact:**  
I love country line dancing!

**My Favorite  
Children's Book:**  
Blueberries for Sal  
by Robert McCloskey



*"This book brings back  
wonderful memories of story  
hour at my local library  
when I was 5 years old."*

## Dates to Remember

**Friday, Oct 16, 2009**  
School Closed: Harvest Fair

**Thursday, Oct 29, 2009**  
Halloween Performances:  
10am and 2pm

**Friday, Oct 30, 2009**  
Halloween Performances:  
10am and 2pm

## Reading Corner

### Books on Play

#### **Featured Book:**

The Power of Play:  
Learning What Comes  
Naturally

by David Elkind



In this book, David Elkind writes about the importance of unstructured play and outdoor activities and how the amount of free time for children has significantly decreased over the years. He argues that unstructured play is crucial for healthy intellectual, social, and emotional development. Check out this book if you want to learn ways of bringing spontaneous, self-initiated play back into your children's lives.

#### **Other Books:**

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder by Richard Louv

Reclaiming Childhood: Letting Children Be Children in Our Achievement-Oriented Society by William Crain

Under Pressure: Rescuing Our Children from the Culture of Hyper-Parenting by Carl Honore

**For a list of other books in the FRC library [click here](#).**

## Websites to Check Out

[www.bayareakidfun.com](http://www.bayareakidfun.com)

a website to help you find places, activities, and events that are available to your family in the San Francisco Bay Area

[www.playborhood.com](http://www.playborhood.com)

a group of local parents dedicated to providing children with safe neighborhoods for free, unstructured play

[www.kaboom.org](http://www.kaboom.org)

a non-profit organization focused on bringing play back into the lives of children by facilitating the building of innovative, kid-inspired playspaces

[www.earthplay.net](http://www.earthplay.net)

"creating outdoor play environments for the soul"

## Words to Inspire

"The most effective kind of education is that a child should play amongst lovely things"

-Plato

