

# PLAY AND LAUGHTER: TWO VERY SERIOUS MATTERS

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Some time ago I found myself in a professional training workshop on the topic of playing. By this time, I had already graduated in psychology and I was looking for theoretical explanations around the importance of play in children and its effects on development. I was surprised when at the beginning of the workshop, the instructor put us in front of a group of toys and asked us to choose one and play for an hour. As I caught myself thinking about how to use those toys it was clear that **my connection to the world of childhood got lost along the way as I became an adult.**

This interesting experience opened my eyes to how adulthood can dull our imagination and the ability to wonder at the world around us. **However, when we embark on our journey as parents, we can recover these more playful and pleasurable moments of amazement and discovery.**

**Some parents see play time as something strictly childish, neglecting the importance this activity has on a child's life.**

According to Bettelheim, an American psychologist (1987), the divide between the worlds of adults and children is a phenomenon of modern society. He states that there used to be a more immediate understanding between adult and child, not only because they played together but mainly because they observed each other and shared an activity that was meaningful to both of them.

**The everyday demands of modern life have accentuated the differences between adults and children.** In a sense, we must recognize that it is healthy to maintain a space where children and adults can express themselves freely. On the other hand, there is certainly a territory to which the adult does not have access, which belongs only to the child. In this space a child holds their deepest fantasies and faces their biggest joys and fears while safely resolving their internal contradictions.

While children deserve and need their own safe spaces, the complete absence of loving adults in a child's recreational activities can be detrimental. I am sure that many of us hold dear the memory of aunts and uncles, grandparents and parents who created space in their lives to join our childhood worlds. From a child's point of view, this represents a privilege.



Nowadays we live at a fast pace of life, where sharing has been replaced by television, video games and computers.

Although it may seem paradoxical, **play represents something very serious in children's development.**

# BENEFITS OF FAMILY PLAY TIME



## STRENGTHEN FAMILY TIES

Games **strengthen cooperation and family bonds**. Playing in a group creates a space of trust and camaraderie and undoubtedly stimulates attention, creativity and strengthens self-esteem.



## CULTIVATE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

**Board games, for their part, represent another source of learning for children.** Respecting the rules, waiting your turn and experiencing failure or triumph are situations that prepare the child to live in society.



## FOSTER EMPATHY

In young children aged 3-5 years, **pretending, such as playing doctor, dad and mom, is an activity where, through imitation of the role of the adult, children practice putting themselves in the place of others.** Changing roles allows them to develop language, creativity and critical thinking skills, while also freeing themselves from real tensions and fears since the characters they adopt can reflect what children are not able to consciously accept.



## EXERCISE THE MIND & BODY

Outdoor games allow you to create awareness of your body. These are essential for the development of a child's motor control and later for their emotional security and confidence. **By participating in the game as a team, the foundations for cooperation and solidarity are being laid.**

**Play, being an enjoyable activity, is a means to dissipate tensions and create inner harmony, and when shared with caregivers and family it brings closeness, harmony and unforgettable memories.** Part of the job of educating is also having fun. Play brings with it relaxation and laughter, which are sometimes the best medicine to create a pleasant atmosphere conducive to healthy communication.

When we as adults allow ourselves to feel joy for what we do, we inch closer to an internal state of contentment that encourages us to cultivate positive qualities in ourselves and our lives. We don't need extra special circumstances to make this happen - we just need a relaxed, open mind and disposition. **Having a good laugh every once in a while will bring more energy into our lives, creating happiness all around.**



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