
The Benefits Of Play On A Child'S Resiliency

When you think of play, it can often be misconstrued as something that is not beneficial. Especially when it comes to children and their ability to learn through play. According to Play at the Center of the Curriculum, play is defined as an expression of the child's developing personality, sense of self, intellect, social capacity, and physicality (Van Hoorn 2015). When focusing on play in a learning curriculum, there can be many benefits for children including, the development of social and emotional skills, encourages language skills, and fosters creativity and imagination. Children develop their social and emotion skills very early on in life, unless they experience a traumatic event which can deter them from developing those important skills. When a child has a loving and rewarding relationship with their parents or guardian early on, it enhances the social emotional skills needed to succeed in life. I feel that it is important to observe children playing on their own because a lot can be learned from watching. Preschool, kindergarten, and the primary years are the key times when children show just how resilient they are.

According to Mead, during the Play Stage, these early years provide children the context and opportunity to see themselves as unique in comparison to others. (Scales 2015). When children can lead their own play, it allows them to use the skills they have developed in their lives thus far and use them to their advantage. This ties in with the benefit of fostering their creativity and imagination. There are so many ways to help children create critical thinking skills and really foster their creativity. Some activities to help children develop these creative skills through play are painting, wearing costumes, or playing with play dough. In the most simplest terms, allow the children to make a mess. As crazy as it may sound, kids needs to have the freedom to create and foster their imaginative skills. "Often parents today think that if they give their children too much free time they are wasting opportunities for learning and preparing children for their futures. But these types of parental choices, though done with love and the best of intentions, are not a gift to children, according to current child development theory and research. Children today desperately need time and space to develop their creative imaginations free from adult agendas" (Child Time 2017). These types of activities go hand in hand with the Dramatic Play stage in Piaget's Development of Play theory. "The play involves the creation of imaginary roles and situations and frequently accompanies the construction of pretend objects, but he representation is more abstract" (Alward 2015).

When a child experiences a traumatic event, it can be extremely difficult for them to open up but, observing them through play can be very helpful when trying to learn about what they have been through. In *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*, by Dr. Bruce Perry, he tells the story of a time in his career when he worked with a young girl who experienced constant sexual abuse by

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her mother's boyfriends over many years and, one of the ways he got her to open up about what she has been through was allowing her to lead their time together through play. He would pull up some blank paper and crayons and allow her to do as she pleased. This made her feel comfortable enough to eventually open up to him about her traumatic past (Perry 2017). Through free play, young children are able to use to their knowledge and imagination to tell their own life stories and one can learn a lot from observing this. I believe that the most important individual who build resiliency in a child's life are their parents. The main reason they play the most important role is because they are the ones who a child should trust and feel comfortable with the most. One important way the parents can strengthen and support a child's resiliency is nurturing a positive self-view. In this day and age, we hear all too often about children and teenagers hurting themselves or even going to the extreme of taking their on lives because they are not okay with who they are or how they look. I feel that it is extremely important to teach our children to love themselves for exactly who they are. Another way to support a child's resiliency is to teach children that change is just another part of life. Often times, when a child goes through a dramatic change, it can be detrimental for them. Whether it be a death in the family, or their parents divorcing, changes like this can be hard on a child. That is why I believe that showing children to accept changes in life and help them work through the change can be great for them.

One other important way to help strengthen a child's resiliency is to show children how to remain hopeful and optimistic. They say to expect the worst and hope for the best but, if we can teach children to be have a positive outlook on life, I feel that it will be much more beneficial for them emotionally. Personally, I believe that building a child's resiliency through play is extremely important. When children are young, it can be difficult to show the how to be resilient if play is not involved so, doing is through play can be much simpler and much more beneficial for their social and emotional skills. One activity that children can do to help strengthen and support resiliency is during story time. A teacher can find a book about a child with a physical disability. For example, a child who is in a wheel chair and is restricted with things he can do. The teacher can ask the students to put themselves in the characters situation and ask them how they feel and what they would do to keep a positive outlook on life. The teacher can also ask the students about any positive things that come from being in a wheelchair so that the positiveness remains throughout the story.

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