

#FridayTips for Parents
OUTDOOR PLAY BASED LEARNING
Therapeutic Powers of Play part 2
Guest Blogger : Deirdre O'Reilly- Play
Therapist

Part 2 for parents!

In this week's guest blog we hear from Deidre a play therapist based in Ireland who shares the therapeutic benefits of play and some handy **play** tips and activities for parents.

Understanding children...

I am seeing quite a few clients with anger and frustration issues which staying at home during lockdown has magnified. Restrictions and lockdown have changed routines, restricted choices and removed available activities which are part of a child's life.

When our feelings are acknowledged, we are grateful that someone has seen / heard us - it feels good, to be seen and understood. Can you imagine a small child being acknowledged for how they are feeling? When empathy is sincere, it's quite emotional. Someone out there actually understands me – hallelujah!

Children's brains are different from adult's brain's, so we need to be able to communicate limits and consequences in a child-appropriate manner. Setting limits without the words NO, STOP or DON'T, can be tricky and won't happen overnight but once you get practicing, setting limits without using the word NO, it is a game changer. It works with children of all ages. Garry Landreth a leading figure in Play Therapy truly believes that limit setting helps children learn self-control, responsibility, and the knowledge that they have choices. Try this...

A.C.T Limit Setting

Acknowledge (the feeling)

Communicate (the limit)

Target (an alternative)

Any 80's parents out there? Remember Catch Phrase; Say what you see.
By acknowledging your child's feelings, you are also teaching them about emotions.

Example of A.C.T limit setting.

A: "You look really angry right now"

C: "It looks like you are going to hit me, but Mammy is not for hitting"

T: "You could jump on these (empty) egg cartons or punch this pillow" (alternative with a choice egg cartons or a pillow)

This type of limit setting takes time, so just practice the acknowledging part to get the hang of it and gradually work up to communicating the limit. I find the hardest one is targeting an alternative, but it comes with practice! When children push boundaries, they are chancing how far or what they can get away with. But, boundaries equal safety. Having no boundaries or limit setting can make children feel unsafe and out of control. Setting limits and boundaries will create a security net around your child. Frustration. Are there days when you think you or your child might explode? Acknowledge the buildup of tension and Pinpoint the area and Breath!....

If you were to ask your child what they look like when they are about to explode? Can you guess what they might say? A Volcano perhaps??

Try out this activity...

Quick Volcano activity for angry / frustrated children

You will need 3 ingredients and 1 egg cup.

- Bicarbonate of soda
- Food colouring / paint
- Vinegar

Allow the child to measure out all of the ingredients (this gives a sense of control) Spoon in your bicarb of soda, now ask what colour your anger looks like today, and allow them to choose and add the colour. Finally, prepare them for the explosion of their anger and add the vinegar, now see it bubble up and over the egg cup. Pure satisfaction!

About the author

My name is Deirdre O'Reilly and I am a Play Therapist based in Killeshandra, Co Cavan, Ireland. I run a private practice from my home, dealing with clients who have mild to moderate behavioural issues. Play has changed my life, my relationship with my own children and given me a sense of (my) self. You can follow me on Facebook or Instagram by looking up Communication Through Play. Happy play days 😊

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Useful Links

Our handy hints and tips on #outdoorplay

<https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/thrive/>

International Play Association (IPA) Booklet for Parents and Carers: Play in Crisis:

<http://ipaworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/IPA-Play-in-Crisis-Booklet-for-parents-and-carers-2020.pdf>

Play Scotland: Resources on The Power of Play <https://www.playscotland.org/play/play-for-health/the-power-of-play/>