

Powerful Preschoolers

What to Expect & How to Support Your
Child's Development Along the Way



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What We're Exploring ...



Inspiring Independence

- The importance of self-care skills, child-led play and risky play



Power Struggles & Tantrums

- What triggers tantrums and power struggles and how to navigate them



Socialization & Friendships

- Understanding the stages of play & how to support social engagement



Inspiring Independence

Self Care Skills

- Children need the **time and space** to practice and build upon new skills.
 - Accomplishing **small tasks daily allows children to take on bigger tasks** as they grow.

Tips & Tricks

- **Encourage your child to do more for themselves!**
 - Dress themselves, put on and zip-up their coats, brush hair/teeth, pour their drinks, serve themselves, clean-up after themselves, etc.
- **Allow your child to work on hard things for longer**
 - Children need to struggle and work at hard things to build confidence in their abilities, while increasing **frustration tolerance**, patience, persistence, perseverance, & pride.
- **Invite your child to help you with tasks around the house, e.g.:**
 - Help you make a meal, load the washing machine/dish washer, water the plants, wipe off the table, feed family pet, etc.



Inspiring Independence

Child-led Play

- **Child-led play requires children to:**
 - Independently self-occupy themselves
 - Initiate & make decisions about their play
 - Navigate & regulate themselves
 - Imagine, explore, investigate, discover, and simply "figure it out."

Tips & Tricks

- Provide a chunk of time everyday in which your **child can engage in child-led play** (indoor and outdoor play counts!).
 - **Less is more** when it comes to toys and materials – best to keep them open-ended when possible!
- **Limit and schedule screen time** – maintain screen time boundaries.



Inspiring Independence

Risky Play

- The more children can take developmentally appropriate risks, the greater their **autonomy, independence, decision-making, confidence, resilience, & risk-management skills develop**. May take into account:
 - Heights children climb & balance their bodies, speed of motion, rough & tumble play, exploration with/around natural elements, etc.

Tips & Tricks

- **Instead of saying "be careful," bring attention to the risk** (e.g. the floor is wet up ahead. How can you move around it?)
 - The overuse of this broad phrase can actually inhibit healthy & necessary risk-taking, induce anxiety, & damper confidence
- Quickly review the surroundings and ask yourself: **"is there real danger?"**
- **Be safe as necessary, not safe as possible!**





Challenging Behaviors

Power Struggles

- When two or more people are **competing for control**
- Children may be more likely to "oppose" an adult's guidance because they:
 - **Seeking more autonomy** over their experiences
 - **Connection seeking** with their caregiver
 - **Hungry or Triple "O": Overwhelmed, Overtired, Overstimulated**

Tips & Tricks

- Provide **more choices** whenever possible
 - "It's time for bed! Do you want to wear your dinosaur pajamas or your rainbow pajamas?" "Do you want an apple or an orange with your lunch?"
- **Avoid giving your child the opportunity to say "no!"**
 - **Instead of:** Are you ready to leave the park and go home?"
 - **Try:** It's time to leave the park and go home. Do you want to skip or stomp to the car?"
- **Connection is key!** More quality time together = greater bond & cooperation





Challenging Behaviors

Tantrums & Meltdowns

- While challenging to navigate through, **tantrums and meltdowns are healthy, developmental, biological states of dysregulation.**
 - The ability to self-regulate is a developmental skill that takes time.
- **Tantrums may result from many things**, including:
 - Seeking more control & autonomy over their experiences
 - Lack of boundaries
 - Hunger and/or the "triple O": **O**verwhelmed, **O**vertired, **O**verstimulated

Tips & Tricks

- **Maintain consistent and reliable boundaries – mean what you say!**
 - **Always follow through with the plan** – increases validity, reliability, sense of security, & trust.
 - **Do not threat** with something you're not prepared to follow-up with.
- **Tantrums are not a time for rationalizing, directing, shaming, or reasoning.**
 - **Instead, validate & reassure** – "You're feeling upset about ____" or "you're disappointed that ____." "I love you, I am here for you, and I will help keep you safe." **After a tantrum is the time to provide some tools:**
 - "I know you were feeling upset before. Sometimes when I feel upset I take big, deep breaths like this... Want to try it with me?"





Socialization & Friends

Stages of Play (Mildred Parten)

- Your **child's stage of play is based on several factors**, including age, personality, experiences and approach to learning.
 - A stage of play is not "better" or "worse" than the other, just different.
- **Unoccupied Play (0–3 Months):**
 - No objective in play & no social engagement
- **Solitary Play (3 months – 2 Years Old):**
 - Plays alone while focusing on their own task – not interested in others
- **Onlooker Play (2 – 3 Years Old):**
 - Begins showing interest in what others are playing with/doing
- **Parallel Play (2.5 – 4 Years Old):**
 - Plays next to others with same materials, may begin copying them
- **Associative Play (3 – 4.5 Years Old):**
 - Interacts and plays with others, but play is not organized/coordinated
- **Cooperative Play (4.5 + Years Old):**
 - Children work together in an organized group, establishing rules & goals





Socialization & Friends

"I don't want to play with you!" "You're not my friend!"

- Children may not want to play with other children for different reasons:
 - Embracing a sense of control by (basically) saying "no."
 - Experimenting with and curious about reactions they can trigger.
 - Different personalities and approaches to learning – and that's okay!

Tips & Tricks

- Step back & give children **more space to work through their struggles**
 - **Avoid** forced sharing & opt for turn-taking instead
 - **Try:** You're upset because you want the truck. When John is done using it, you can have a turn. What else can you play with in the meanwhile?"
 - **Avoid** forcing children to play with one another
 - Leads to resentment, frustration, and sends a message that we have to put someone else's comfort before our own
 - **Learning how to say "no" & hear "no" is very important.**
 - **Try:** "You're upset because John isn't playing with you. I wonder what else you can do instead?"
- **Model the desired language & behaviors you wish to see in our children**





Questions?

Let's Hear Them!



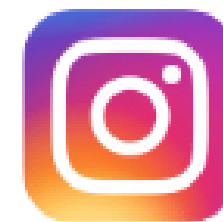
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