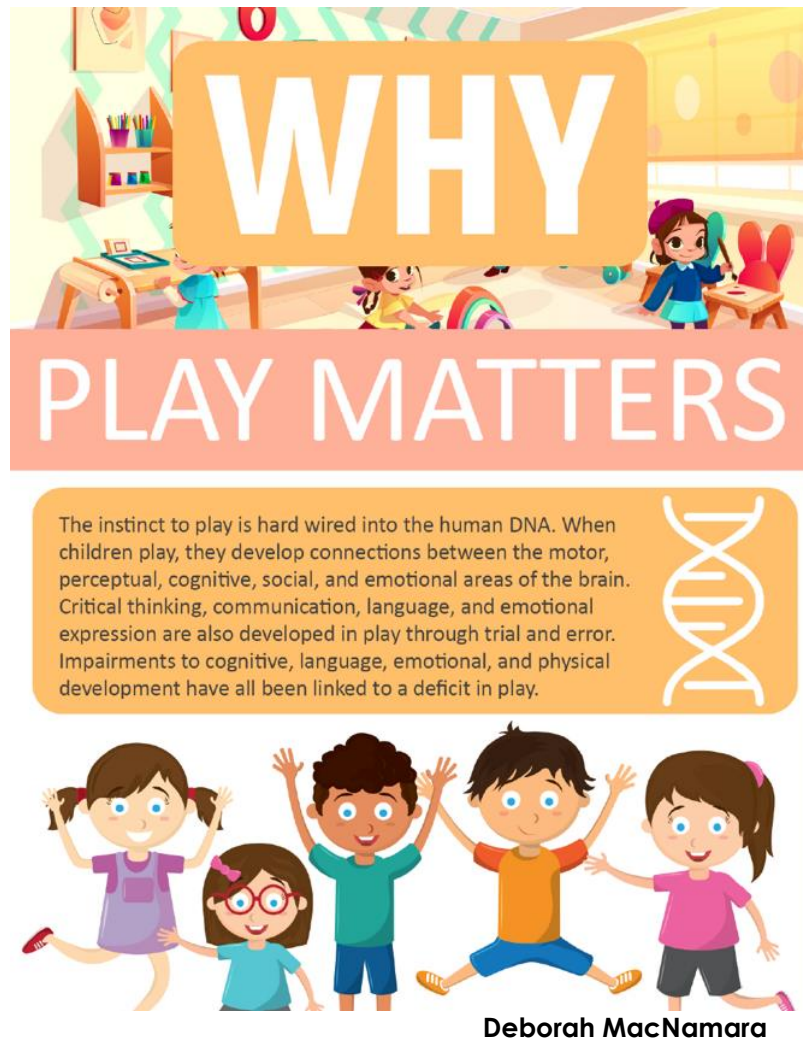


**The Power of Play**  
Deborah MacNamara  
An evening of Learning  
Presented for the Meadowridge Community  
Wednesday, September 28<sup>th</sup>.



**[Zoom recording of the information session- active till October 27<sup>th</sup>](#)**

Passcode: z.m0!ECC

\* (click on the word Zoom above to open a new browser)

## Book Recommendations:

Books for further inquiry into the ideas of play, raising children and parent education:

Price of Privilege\*  
Madeline Levine

Let the Children Play  
Pasi Salsberg

Playful Parenting: An Exciting New Approach to Raising Children That Will Help You Nurture Close Connections, Solve Behavior Problems, and Encourage Confidence  
Lawrence Cohen

Untangled  
Lisa Damour

Hold On to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers  
Gordon Neufeld and Gabor Mate

The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness and Healing in a Toxic Culture  
Gabor Mate

\*This title is available in the Meadowridge School Library



Deborah MacNamara

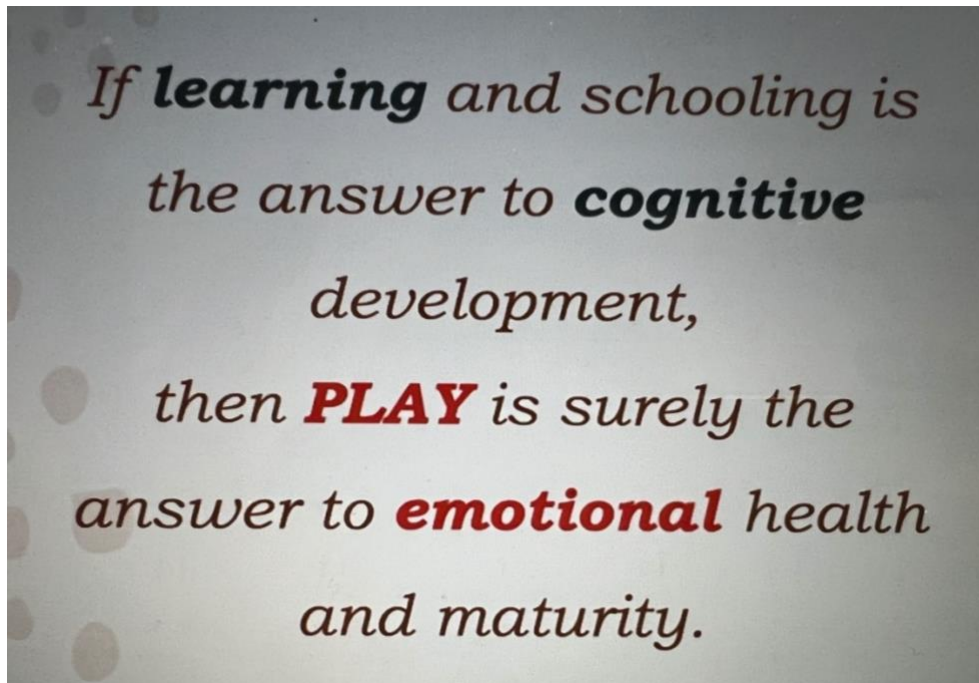
**Courses that were suggested for families wishing to learn more-**

The entire catalogue of courses can be found here

<https://neufeldinstitute.org/courses/>

**Suggestions from the question asking for a direct referral where these classes.**

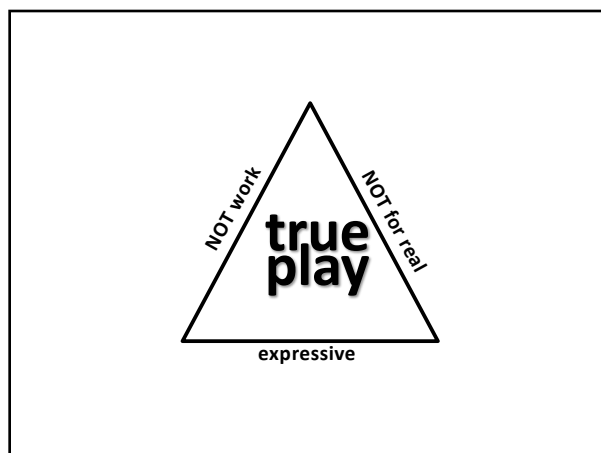
- The Power to Parent
- Making Sense of Adolescence (recommended for those with children aged 9,10,11)



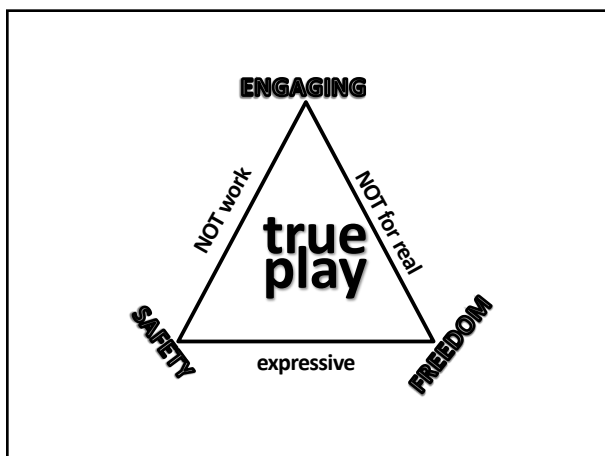
Deborah MacNamara



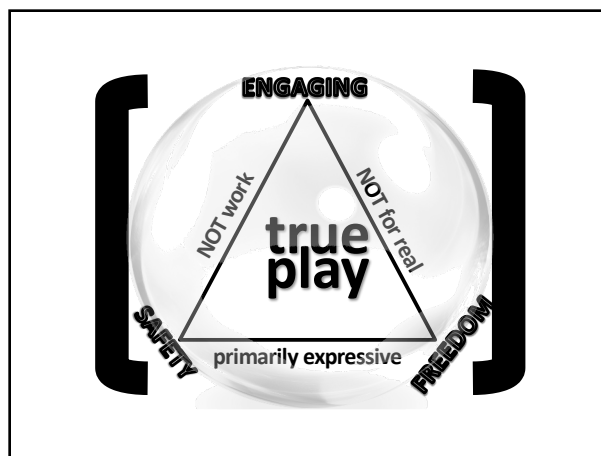
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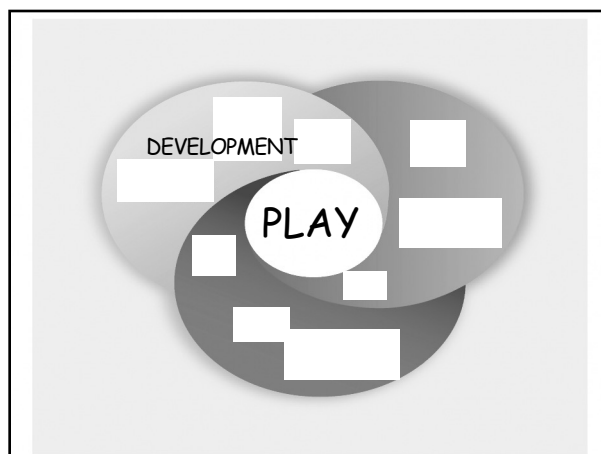
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### THE ROLE OF PLAY IN DEVELOPMENT

1. Play is where the self is truly expressed.
2. Play is where creativity is most likely to happen.
3. Play is where growth and development first take place.
  - the precursor of thinking and problem solving
  - where skills for adulthood are mastered
  - where life can be practiced without consequences
  - where a sense of agency is first developed

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**What role does PLAY serve in brain growth and development?**

8

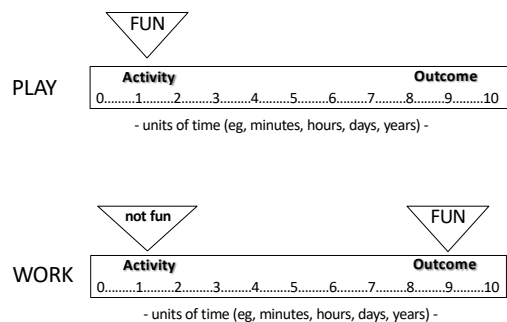
### PLAY AND THE BRAIN

1. Videogames can lead to isolated improvement in specific cognitive-motor skills.
  - eg, improved reaction times, sensori-motor coordination, 3D perception
  - there is no evidence of increased brain power or maturation
  - the developmental liabilities greatly outweigh the isolated gains
2. 'True' play programs the brain's problem solving networks
  - it is playful activity, not stimulation or instruction, that makes a positive difference in brain development
  - play builds the brain that can then be used to receive instruction or solve problems
  - the most impressive brain growth happens when play is in the context of warm human connection

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**When can work replace play in the life of a child?**

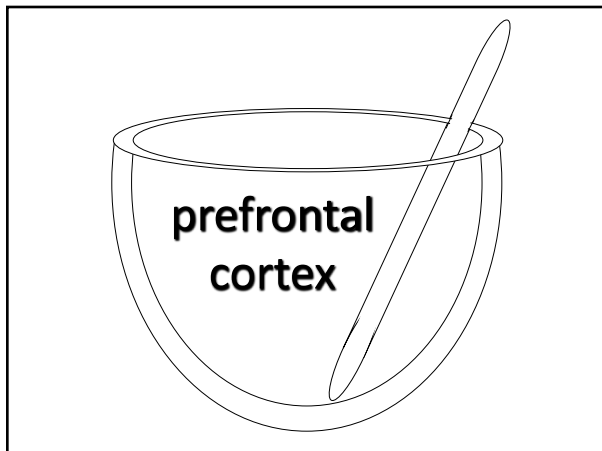
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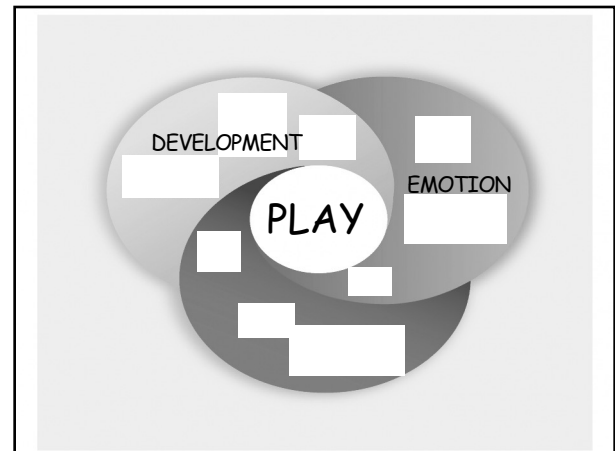
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**A child is not ready for work until the prefrontal cortex is sufficiently developed.**

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**DEFINING EMOTION**

- to be stirred up
  - happens to us as opposed to under our control
  - is irrational although the brain has its reasons
- to be moved to
  - is meant to move us in ways that would serve us
  - how a child is moved reveals how they are stirred up
  - emotions seek expression

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**EMOTION  
IS NATURE'S WAY  
OF TAKING CARE OF US**

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**PROBLEMS WITH RAW AND  
UNBRIDLED EXPRESSION**

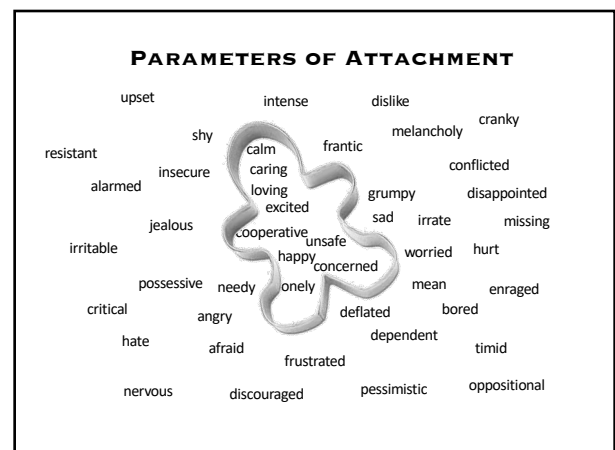
a) is **uncivilized**

- messy & noisy, chaotic & unacceptable, alienating & wounding. (most problem behaviour is emotionally fueled)
- adults can easily become prematurely preoccupied with imposing order on the uncivilized behaviour

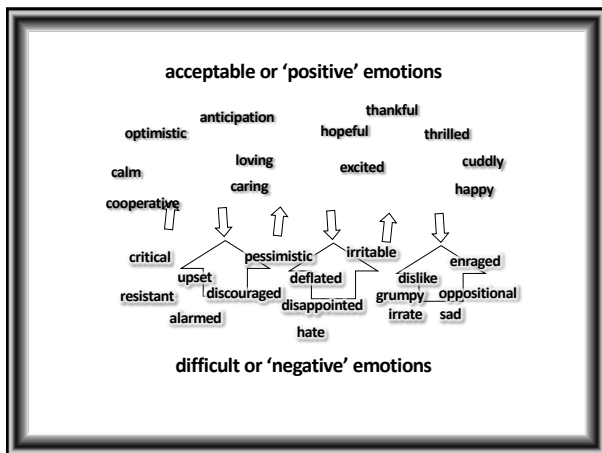
b) can **threaten** the child's working **attachments**

- the attachment brain will press down on emotions that threaten relationships

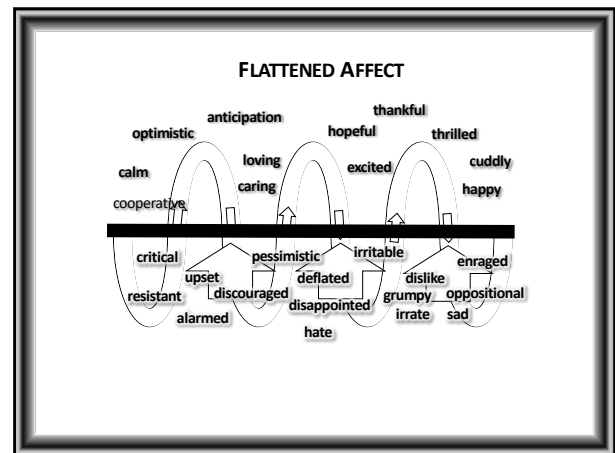
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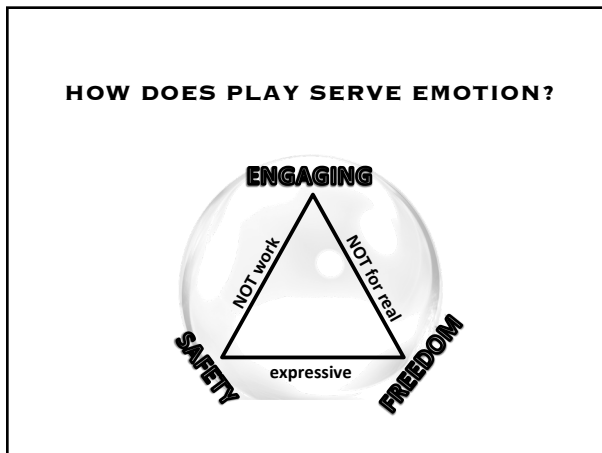
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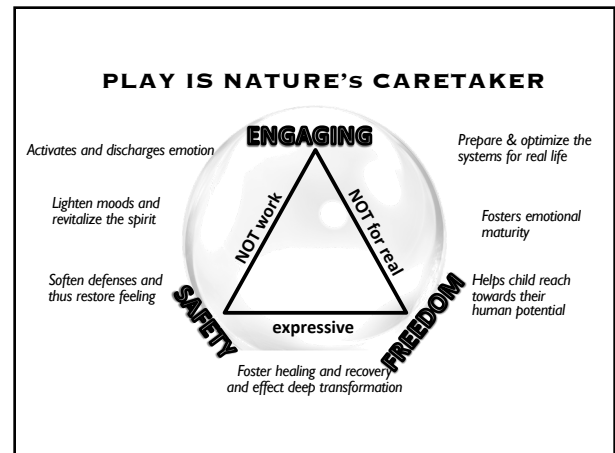
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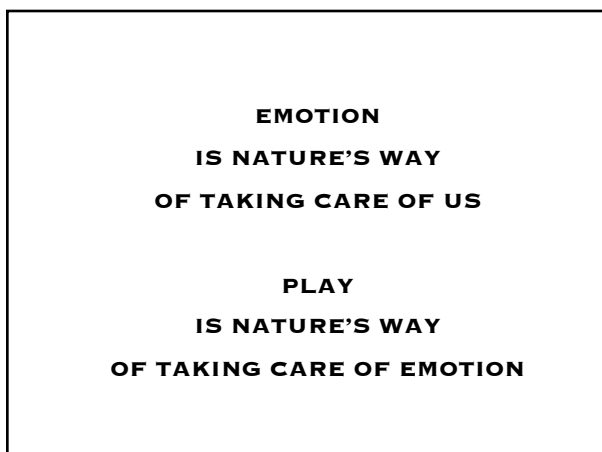
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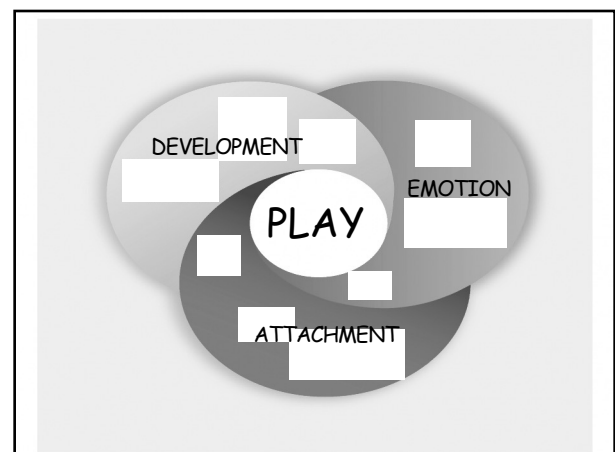
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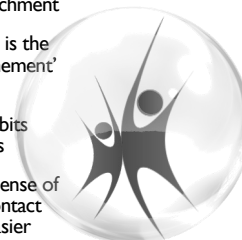
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### How **PLAY** PRIMES ATTACHMENT

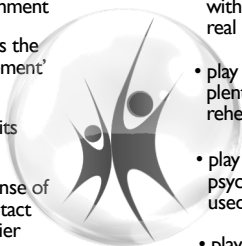
- play is more likely to engage than attachment
- playful collecting is the essence of 'attunement'
- play defuses the shyness that inhibits new attachments
- play provides a sense of safety, making contact and collecting easier
- play softens defenses that could impede attachment



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### How **PLAY** PRIMES ATTACHMENT

- play is more likely to engage than attachment
- playful collecting is the essence of 'attunement'
- play defuses the shyness that inhibits new attachments
- play provides a sense of safety, making contact and collecting easier
- play softens defenses that could impede attachment
- play at getting close without attaching for real
- play readies through plenty of practice and rehearsal
- play prepares the psychological constructs used in attachment
- play protects the forward leading edge of attachment



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### PLAYING INTO CONTACT & CONNECTION

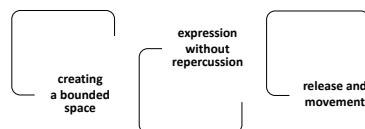
- collect the eyes, nods and smiles in play
- play into physical contact and connection through games and teasing where it doesn't count for real
- playfully blindsides with quick 'accidental' contact that is brief and so 'doesn't count', making sure to stay within the thresholds of play
- play into sameness, which is a less vulnerable modality
- play into their caring alpha by playing the baby, the dependent, the tiny creature that requires taking care of

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### CREATING PLAY SANCTUARIES FOR EMOTION

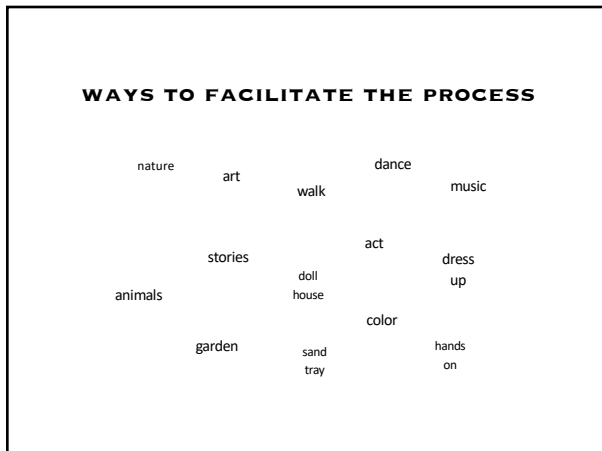
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### THE HEALING DANCE OF PLAY



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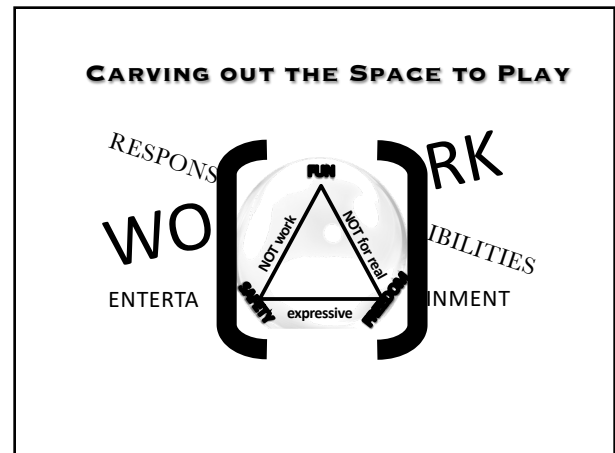


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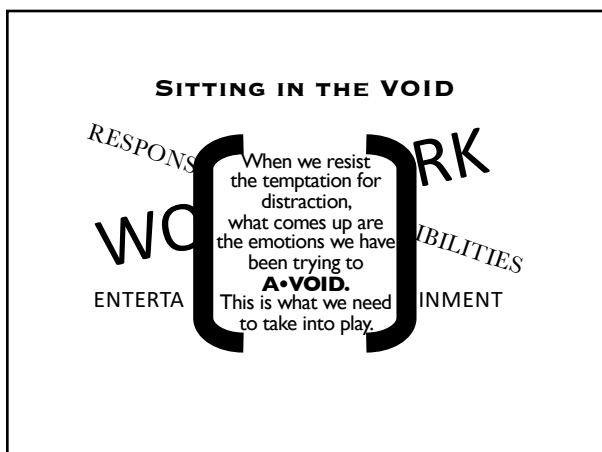
### LOSING THE SPACE TO PLAY

- In the last 20 years, children have lost **twelve hours** of free time a week, including **eight hours** of unstructured play and outdoor activities.
- Free unstructured play, spontaneous pickup games, and self-initiated dramatic play, have been almost silenced by the **high-tech commercialized world** we have created
- Outdoor play has **decreased by 71%** in one generation in both the US and the UK.
- Escalating diagnoses of **childhood depression and ADHD** has paralleled the loss of play

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### FINDING A PLAYGROUND FOR EMOTIONS

- **STORIES** – activates and expresses emotion, especially overwhelming ones
- **DRAMA** – essential in identity development and immunizing emotionally
- **MUSIC** – expresses emotions without words and can capture any emotion
- **LAUGHTER** – allows access to emotions that are too hard to face directly
- **ART** – rewarding it or having an outcome destroys the playfulness within it
- **MOVEMENT** – emotion fuels it and we need to a form that works for us

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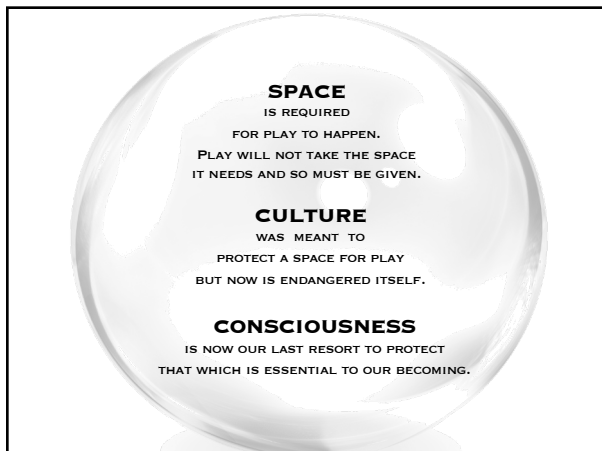
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## **SPACE IN ONE'S LIFE TO PLAY**

- *enough freedom from competing activities* -

- a) enough freedom from the pressure to produce and perform
- b) enough freedom from screens, stimulation and entertainment
- c) enough freedom from structured activity
- d) enough freedom from instruction and schooling
- e) enough freedom from work and responsibility

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**"NEVER IN MY WILDEST  
DREAMS COULD I HAVE  
IMAGINED THAT WE WOULD  
HAVE TO DEFEND CHILDREN'S  
RIGHT TO PLAY."**

*Nancy Carlsson-Paige*

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## **CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR PLAY**

1. **VALUE** the role of play in children's lives
2. Don't turn activities into work by focusing on **OUTCOMES**
3. Buffer against outside forces and **PROTECT** spaces for play
4. Help a child find their **NATURAL** bent for emotional expression
5. Provide the necessary **FREEDOMS** that give rise to play
6. Provide **REST** by cultivating deep meaningful relationships

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*If **learning** and schooling is  
the answer to **cognitive**  
development,  
then **PLAY** is surely the  
answer to **emotional** health  
and maturity.*

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