

A Letter from Play to Parents

Dear Parents,

It's me, Play. We have not spent much time together lately—I miss you.

When you were a kid, we were together all the time: riding bikes, sculpting stuff out of play dough, building moon bases out of blocks, and squishing mud. Remember how many times you were told to quit playing with your green beans and eat them? Remember all the times your Mom yelled “goofing around with those toys is *not* going to get that pigsty-of-a-mess you call a bedroom cleaned up!” Remember the fun we had on car trips? It was great until the order to “stop the silliness back there!” boomed from the front seat. Remember how that big slide burnt your legs, but you just could not stop going down again and again? Back then, all you wanted to do was hang out with me. Those were good times.

Anyway, I'm not writing to relive old times. I'm writing about your kids. I don't see them that much...they're MIA. From what I hear, their days are full of adult-led activities, screen time, and rushed academics.

I know you want the best. You want them to get ahead in life and be ready for whatever it tosses their way. You're scared that if you don't push them a bit they will not “be ready”. You feel there is learning to be done and that there is not time for your old buddy, Play. You're also under a lot of peer pressure to do what other parents are doing. If the kid down the street is shuttled between academic preschool, dance, karate, a traveling soccer team, and a foreign language class you'd look like a bad parent if your kids spent time “just playing”.

I get the Fear and the Pressure, but it's getting a bit intense. You're expecting things out of your kids that are not developmentally appropriate. You're expecting them to do things at the age of 3 that *you* did not do until the age of 5 or 6. Is it right to push kids to do things they are not cognitively, emotionally, or physiologically ready for?

The thing is, if you want the best for your kids, *I'm* the answer. It's my job to get them ready for whatever life throws in their path, to prepare them to thrive in an ever-changing world, to help them learn to be creative, knowledgeable, and well-adjusted. I don't want to brag, but I'm an evolutionary strategy lots of creatures use to prepare for life. Puppies, chimps, whales, elephants, tigers—the list is huge. They all use me, Play, as a strategy for gathering information about their surroundings, sorting and classifying objects and ideas, developing social skills, learning to self-regulate, and so much more.

Don't take my word for it, there is plenty of research and anecdotal evidence showing that Playful Learning is a better choice for young kids than computers, videos, flashcards, worksheets, and adult-led academic settings. Check it out when you get a chance.

Right now, I'm just asking you to relax a bit. Let your kids play and enjoy childhood. Stop rushing and pushing.

By the way, you look stressed. You could use more Play, too. How about right now? Grab a towel, fasten it around your neck, and see if you can still fly the way you did when you were a kid--If you try it, send a picture for my scrapbook.

Hope to see your kids...and you...soon!

Your Buddy,

Play

EXPLORATIONS
Early Learning