

The Power Of Play...by Stacy G. York, LCSW

There is more and more research about the power of play and how it can help our health as well as our relationships. We have known for years that children who play with other children benefit because they learn social reciprocity. There are a lot of other things that are learned from play as well. We learn to share, we learn to use our imagination, we learn problem solving. A tremendous benefit from play is the outlet of stress. Laughter makes us feel better. The dilemma for play is that many of us stop doing it after a certain age. When we have children, we forget to play with them. For years, play therapists have been playing with children as a way of communicating. Play is the way children communicate. Play is also important in sequential brain development. As my therapeutic work continues, I have begun to teach families how to play together. What I have observed is healthier interactions, increased windows of tolerances, and the development of positive neurofeedback loops. We as adults look forward to vacations. We ski, snowboard, golf, hunt, fish, camp, ride bikes, shop, go out to eat. These are all stress relievers. These things feel good. As adults, we are responsible for giving children the opportunity to play. We are also responsible for being their play partners early on in their lives. Children must learn to play with their caregivers first before they will engage in successful play with their peers. As they become more confident in their play skills, their social skills with flourish as well. Play can often be for only a few minutes several times a day to be effective. Many children feel so much better after they play. Kids can release so much stress, anxiety, tension, and energy when they get outside. Sometimes they need to be taught how to play outside. That's where we as adults come in. Let's face it, we feel better when we get active too. Go outside, take a walk, dig in the dirt, play on the swings, engage with your kids and have FUN. Use your imaginations. Create a play world that is special between you and your child. We spend all winter retreating inside to stay warm. Spending time outside with your children will help build relationships. Relationship is the number one strategy for "managing your child's behavior."