



# THE SCIENCE OF PLAY



PLAY HELPS CHILDREN WORK THROUGH STRESS AND WORRIES. PLAY BENEFITS PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH, AND IT HELPS MAINTAIN SOME NORMALITY IN DIFFICULT TIMES.



EARLY CHILDHOOD IS THE PERFECT TIME TO LEARN THROUGH PLAY. SCIENCE SHOWS PLAY CAN EFFECT SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS IN THE BRAIN, HELPING BRAIN DEVELOPMENT.

PLAY IS HOW WE BUILD FRIENDSHIPS; IT IS VITAL TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL SKILLS AND SELF-CONTROL.

PLAY HELPS CHILDREN FOCUS. STUDIES FIND THAT CHILDREN FOCUS MORE ON THEIR SCHOOL WORK AFTER RECESS.

PLAYING FOSTERS CREATIVITY, REDUCES STRESS AND IMPROVES SLEEP.

STIMULATING CHILDREN'S INVENTIVE CREATIVITY (THROUGH WORD PLAY, RHYMES OR STORY-TELLING) FOSTERS LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND PREVENTS PROBLEMS SUCH AS DYSLEXIA.

BETWEEN THE AGES OF 2 AND 7, CHILDREN'S PLAYING PRETEND HELPS THEM SOLIDIFY THE CONCEPTS THAT THEY'RE DEVELOPING COGNITIVELY.

STUDIES SUGGEST THAT PLAY MAY HELP IMPROVE THE SUCCESS OF ADHD TREATMENT, ESPECIALLY WITH REGARD TO SOCIAL SUCCESS.

PLAY HELPS BONDING. SCIENCE PROVES THAT A PARENT AND CHILD ARE LITERALLY ON THE SAME WAVELENGTH WHEN THEY PLAY TOGETHER. PARENTS ARE NEURALLY RESPONSIVE TO THEIR INFANTS DURING SOCIAL PLAY, AND WHEN THE PARENT IS MORE NEURALLY RESPONSIVE, THE INFANT IS MORE ATTENTIVE.

CHILDREN WHO LACK EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND ENDURE STRESSFUL SITUATIONS ARE MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE TOXIC STRESS, WHICH IS ASSOCIATED WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS, SUBSTANCE ABUSE – AND LOW AMOUNTS OF PLAY.



## THE SCIENCE OF CARE

Listen First, a UNODC initiative to support happy, healthy and nurturing families.

Made possible with the generous support of France.

For more information and references, please visit: [www.unodc.org/listenfirst](http://www.unodc.org/listenfirst)



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