

News & Announcements

Study Skills Workshops

We are offering spring & summer workshops in:

- ▶ overcoming exam anxiety
- ▶ middle school study skills
- ▶ high school study skills

For more information, contact us!

Play Facts

According to a University of Michigan study, between 1981 and 1997

- ▶ the time children spent playing declined 16%
- ▶ children's participation in other passive leisure declined 24%
- ▶ children's participation in sports increased 21%
- ▶ participation in art activities increased 37%
- ▶ reports of reading increased 31%

Math Mania Evening

PIMS, The Pacific Institute for the Mathematical Sciences, will host a Math Mania evening, Tuesday, May 25th. These events are usually well attended by students and parents from around Victoria. With lots of hands-on activities and games demonstrating fun methods for teaching math and computer science concepts to children, it's easy to see why.

Where: Lake Hill Elementary School
1031 Lucas Ave.,
Victoria, BC

When: May 25th, 7:00-8:30 pm

Cost: Free

More Info: www.pims.math.ca

The Value of Play

by Maureen Bouey

"The most effective kind of education is that a child should play amongst lovely things."

Plato (427 BC - 347 BC)

Education isn't a contest or a race; it's a process, and one that each human child experiences differently.

As parents, we love our children and want the best for them, but these days there is an unmistakable ambience of competitiveness around the lives of children.

In California, there is now even a prenatal university; pregnant women are taught how to stimulate the baby while in the womb to produce a brighter child!

We fill our kids' days, weeks and months – sometimes to overflowing – with both in and out-of-school activities, as we try to give them every possible advantage. Many parents spend much of their day in their cars, ferrying children to and from school, lessons and sports. It's all done from, and for, love, of course.

Just for a moment, let's stop, take a deep breath, and remember:

- 1) With respect to learning, formally structured learning environments are not the only way to learn, and
- 2) Plain good old-fashioned fun – for its own sake – is an important factor in every child's (and every adult's) well-being.

First, it is often said that "play is children's work". Imaginative play and experiential hands-on (kinesthetic) learning is important to children's learning processes. Play also helps

children of all ages to be more creative, and self-sufficient.

Just some of the benefits of playtime are: creativity, thinking and language skills, small and large muscle building, conflict resolution opportunities and many other important physical, cognitive and social skills.

Well-known medical expert and media personality, Dr. Alan Greene¹ notes, "We know that active play improves school performance, concentration, mood and behaviour." Play is simply fundamental to healthy minds and bodies. And, life lessons learned while having fun with siblings and friends often wind up having the deepest impact, and being the most memorable.

"If A is success in life, then A equals X plus Y plus Z. Work is X; Y is play; and Z is keeping your mouth shut."

Albert Einstein (1879 - 1955)
Observer, Jan. 15, 1950

The second point is that fun is an important factor in our overall well-being. It is essential for us to keep schedules that allow harmony between work and play time. We all need to rejuvenate and refresh ourselves with play – regularly. "Play" can be any spontaneous activity that is unstructured.

A spontaneous activity is different from enrolling a child in Little League or signing her up for violin lessons (however worthwhile these are). Spontaneous play occurs when we do an activity freely, without being directed. When children organize their own ball game, puppet show or an afternoon of imagining, they are

About Us

Our Mission Is:

▶ To provide top quality, flexible learning support and service to students and parents of students through:

Superior private tutoring matched specifically to each student's needs *and* stimulating, small classes.

▶ To enhance students' skills and increase their learning confidence through individualized support, recognizing each student's unique abilities.

▶ To improve quality of life, in individuals and communities through education.

▶ Our tutors are certified teachers and professionals. All of our tutors are carefully screened.

▶ We will help you to reach your goals, no matter your level.

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meeting their own needs for spontaneous play.

More and more experts agree that this kind of spontaneous play is key for children's physical health, as well as for their emotional well-being. Famous Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau said, in his celebrated book on educating children³, "You are worried about seeing him spend his early years in doing nothing. What! Is it nothing to be happy? Nothing to skip, play, and run around all day long? Never in his life will he be so busy again."

The United Nations even included the right to play in the 1989 UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child.

"If you want to see what children can do, you must stop giving them things."³ They really do not need, or particularly benefit from, the vast quantities being showered on them. Dr. Greene suggests providing your child with a few simple, versatile toys: blocks, Lego, wooden spoons and bowls, etc., to allow the imagination room to play.

I remember when my sister and her two pre-school aged boys came to visit one summer; my sister and I got some large fridge and stove cardboard boxes from an appliance store and brought them home. The boxes became forts, houses, schools – the kids liked them so much, in fact, they wound up laying them on their sides and "camping" in them with sleeping bags at night. Each had his/her own "bunker" and decorated and painted it according to individual taste. It was free, it was fun, it was creative, and it was memorable!

If your children complain of being bored, too many scheduled activities could be the culprit. In an Internet published document on this subject, the Illinois Early Learning Project Research Centre⁴, notes: "If a child says, 'I'm bored,' she may need more unstructured time for play."

Children need down time and time to be alone – some more than others. They need time when their imaginations and creativity can take hold and they can be utterly absorbed in whatever they are doing. These are the times when children experience the full benefits of play. Avoid lots of television watching; you may or may not want to completely restrict your child's TV viewing, but remember, TV watching does not fall into the category of "creative" spontaneous play.

Children learn by observing what you do, not doing what you say. All of us need to play to balance ourselves. Katherine Gibson, in "Unclutter Your Life", talks about "cluttered kids"⁵.

... kids are over-organized... Instead of tunneling their way to China in the backyard, these tiny tykes are conducting interactive, multimedia explorations of simulated archeology {using the computer}digs – all without dirtying their Baby Gaps...

Children and adults alike, we all benefit from a balance of work and play in our lives. If we want our children to lead harmonious lives, we need to do two things: role model both working and playing, and give our kids space to just "be" who they are. After all, as many Buddhists say, we are human beings, not human doings.

"The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity. The creative mind plays with the objects it loves."

Carl Jung (1875 - 1961)

Footnotes

¹ Chief Medical Officer of A.D.A.M., Founder & CEO of DrGreene.com, and Pediatric Expert for AmericanBaby.com. On the Clinical Faculty at Stanford University School of Medicine, President of Health Internet Ethics, helped URAC develop its standards for eHealth accreditation.

² Emile, 1762

³ Norman Douglas

⁴ Part of the Illinois State Board of Education.

⁵ Katherine Gibson, Unclutter Your Life. (Victoria: Beyond Words Publishing) p. 100