



# STEPS TO SUECESS OT

February newsletter



## The Importance of play:

As occupational therapists, our jobs are to help students reach their optimal abilities in all areas of their lives. One of the main focuses we address when working with children is the occupation of play and play participation (OTPF-IV, 2020). From birth to adulthood, Play is an important aspect of ones life. As children, play is invaluable for the creation of new neural pathways, which promotes brain growth and development as a child explores and learns to make sense of the environment around them (Yogman et. al., 2017). It facilitates social development and a sense of self trust and agency (Yogman et. al., 2017). As adults, remembering the impact of play is also important. It helps with connection (to others and ourselves), help in relieving stress, and provides opportunity to learn and gain a new skill (Farley et.al., 2021). Implementing play at every stage of our growth, is said to have a positive impact of on one's overall wellbeing; fostering a sense of belonging and deeper connections, resiliency in managing our emotions, and increases of sense of meaning and accomplishment (Farley et.al., 2021).

This month, try finding time and ways to make things more playful and light hearted. With your children, colleagues, family, friends or moments of stress. Some crafts and ideas to follow!

Evidence suggests that there are 6 main stages of play that are developed and by the age of four. Cooperative play typically develops by the age of four; where they are interested playing and engaging with others (Pathways.org, 2023).

Scan for more details  
about when each stage  
occurs



## Skills Built Through Play:

Problem solving  
Social awareness  
Communication  
Flexibility & adaptability  
Imagination & creativity  
Confidence & Self-esteem  
Discovering interests

### Structured Play:

Type of play where ones has to follow directions or rules.

**Examples:** Board games, puzzles, team games/activities (involving 2+ people).

### Unstructured Play:

Type of play guided by an individuals own thoughts and interests.

**Examples:** Imagination games such as dress up, exploring outdoors or playing on the playground.

(Pathways.org, 2023)

## FEBURARY HIGHLIGHTS

### Valentines Day:

Reminds us of all the special people in our life we appreciate and love.

### Black History Month:

Honoring Black change-makers, brave thinkers and leaders.

### Groundhog Day:

Will spring arrive earlier this year?

Scan and listen for a friendly and evidence based reminder on why fun and playfulness is important as adults!



## OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FOCUSED PLAY IDEAS & ACTIVITIES TO TRY AT HOME THIS MONTH



- **Build a fort:** Building forts with your little ones can help grow stronger parental and familial bonds and connections. It also provides multiple other developmental skills and benefits such as strengthening of the trunk and body, gross motor skills, learning teamwork, executive functioning, motor planning, and provides a lot of sensory input.
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zR1Z7euvdhk>
- **Library Outing:** An indoor activity for all ages to enjoy during the cold days. You can make this a structured activity by having the children choose books about a certain topic (take a look at our February highlights for some topic ideas!) or you can keep this activity unstructured by allowing the child to choose books based on their interests. This outing can facilitate a sense of confidence and independence by having them lead the outing and checking their books out on their own. It can also enhance opportunities to increase literacy and communication skills important for one's day to day.
- **Bake heart shaped cookies:** This is a great activity to facilitate following multi-step directions, working on math and reading skills, exploring and touching different textures. Having to mix, roll, knead, and manipulate dough helps with enhancing fine motor skills and arm strength which can be helpful for future daily living and handwriting skills.
  - <https://laurenslatest.com/slice-n-bake-valentine-heart-cookies/>



# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FOCUSED PLAY IDEAS & ACTIVITIES TO TRY AT HOME THIS MONTH



- **Bring the Snow Indoors!** Follow the link below on step by step directions on how to make fake snow for your child to play with at home. This is a great sensory experience that also fosters their creative thinking and motor planning abilities. It can increase sustained attention and sitting at the table. Edible and age various age appropriate options available.
  - <https://messyplaykits.com/blogs/resources/the-best-diy-fake-snow-recipes-for-sensory-play-with-kids#:~:text=With%20%C2%BD%20cups%20of%20conditioner,to%20sculpt%20all%20winter%20long!>
- **Valentines Tissue Paper Crafts:** These crafts are great for your little one to improve grasping and fine motor skills by separating or ripping the tissue paper to create something from the heart. If your child is of cutting age, have them participate in cutting the materials too. Step by step directions and materials can be found in the links.
  - *DIY tissue paper flowers:*
    - <https://www.mommalew.com/diy-tissue-paper-flowers/>
  - "Stained glass" heart craft:
    - <https://weefolkart.com/tissue-paper-stained-glass-hearts/>
- **Popsicle Puzzle Crafts:** This are a great craft to do with the family that will provide continued use! This craft is good in promoting creativity, appropriate grasping skills, visual motor planning, and executive function. While this specific link focuses on the topic of winter, this craft can be done my painting letters and numbers to foster letter/number recognition and formation. Step by step directions and materials can be found in the link
  - <https://weefolkart.com/craft-sticks-winter-puzzle-craft/>



# AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE FUN AND LEARNING WE HAVE BEEN DOING THIS MONTH AT STEPS TO SUCCESS



## References:

Farley, A., Kennedy-Behr, A., & Brown, T. (2021). An Investigation Into the Relationship Between Playfulness and Well-being in Australian Adults: An Exploratory Study. OTJR : occupation, participation and health, 41(1), 56-64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1539449220945311>

The 6 stages of how kids learn to play: Play development. Pathways.org. (2023, November 28). <https://pathways.org/kids-learn-play-6-stages-play-development/>

Pathways.org. (2023, April 12). The difference between structured vs. Unstructured play. Pathways.org. <https://pathways.org/watch/structured-vs-unstructured-play/#:~:text=Do%20you%20know%20the%20difference,them%20or%20playing%20without%20direction.>

Yogman, M., Garner, A., Hutchinson, J., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, R. M., Baum, R., Gambon, T., Lavin, A., Mattson, G., Wissow, L., Hill, D. L., Ameenuddin, N., Chassiakos, Y. (Linda), Cross, C., Boyd, R., Mendelson, R., Moreno, M. A., Radesky, J., Swanson, W. S., ... Smith, J. (2018). The power of play: A pediatric role in enhancing development in young children. Pediatrics, 142(3). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-2058>

