



Radio Stations : **All Community Radio Stations**
Subject : **Early Childhood Development**
Audience : **Parents, caregivers and educators**
Program Topic : **Playing pretend games with your child (LOVE)**

Guidelines to the presenter

- Presenter – please familiarize yourself with the brief and the use the facts effectively by referring to them from time to time during the show.
- You should be seen as a peer rather than an authority.
- Offer guidance or opinion rather than telling people what to do.
- Encourage people to seek further information
- Always keep the objectives and outcomes in mind and drive these.

Topic:

Playing “pretend” games with your child

Objectives

- Highlight the power and purpose playing “pretend/make-believe”
- Share examples of how to conduct this with your child

Introduction

On this show, we celebrate the fact that you are the most important person in your child’ life. You have the power to give your child the best possible start in life and it doesn’t have to cost you a cent.

Over the last couple of weeks we have been talking about the importance of play for children. Play stimulates children’s learning abilities by fostering creativity, building critical thinking, sparking intellectual curiosity, and facilitating learning by doing. Imaginative play is critical for developing creative and critical thinking. We may also call it “pretend” or “make-believe”. This type of play is essential for children’s development. While this is something that we all may be aware of, we may not know how powerful it is nor how to conduct it properly.

Questions	Facts/Information
<p>1. <i>If you have missed the last couple of shows, let’s quickly recap on why it is important that our children have time to play?</i></p>	<p>Play promotes all areas of a toddler’s development – physical, intellectual, language and social. Currently, one of the most concerning aspects of raising children is the amount of time they spend in front of screens, whether it is TV, DVD, video, etc. When children focus their attention onto a screen, it is a very passive form of learning or entertainment. Instead of using their own imaginations to learn about the world and create something, children are passive recipients and this does not engage children in a kinesthetic manner using their entire bodies.</p>
<p>2. <i>Are there different types of play?</i></p>	<p>Yes there are many different types of play. Children play imaginatively and creatively in various different ways based on many</p>

<p>3. <i>Can you tell us a bit about these different types of play?</i></p>	<p>factors such as age, play environment, toys provided, etc. Children can engage in play by themselves or with others. There are a few common types – activity play, construction type play, games with rules and imaginary play.</p> <p>Active play happens when children use their large muscles and move around rather than staying in one place. This type of play releases energy and develops coordination. Arts and crafts, and construction/building play are ways for children to express their creativity, encourages focus and concentration, and develops fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination. It also allows children to feel proud of themselves and gain a sense of mastery after they have created something.</p> <p>Imaginary play happens when children use their imaginations to create pretend and make-believe scenarios. Children can engage in this type of play using small toy figures, puppets, dolls, or stuffed animals for example. Or children can act out a particular role themselves and become a part of a play drama. Often, dressing up and using props will be part of this kind of imaginary play.</p>
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	<p>The type of play known as Games with Rules includes board games, card games, and structured sports activities. This type of play becomes important for children as they grow older, especially from ages 6 or 7 and up. With this type of play, the focus is playing by the rules and often involves a winner or loser. There is much less room for a child using imagination and creativity with this type of play because it is structured and rule-bound. Although Games with Rules play is important for children to learn to deal with competition, rules, and the real world, creative and imaginative play is also very important for children’s healthy development and should not be ignored in favor of Games with Rules.</p>
<p>4. <i>What is free-play? I have heard a lot about this?</i></p>	<p>All children should have time for lots of unscheduled, independent, non-screen time to be creative, to reflect, and to decompress. This is free play - though parents can certainly monitor play for safety, a large proportion of play should be child driven rather than adult directed. Ideally all play should be in ways, free play, which means that the play is initiated by the child. Parents should encourage free play as a healthy, essential part of childhood.</p>

<p>5. <i>Why is this important?</i></p>	<p>Children learn important life skills and develop many different parts of themselves during play. There's a lot happening during playtime. Little ones are lifting, dropping, looking, pouring, bouncing, hiding, building, knocking down, and more. Children are busy when they're playing. And, more than that, they are learning. They are learning key scientific concepts, such as what sinks and floats; mathematical concepts, including how to balance blocks to build a tower; and literacy skills, such as trying out new vocabulary or storytelling skills as children "act out" different roles. Play is the true work of childhood.</p> <p>And when your children play with you, they are also learning—that they are loved and important and that they are fun to be around. These social-emotional skills give them the self-esteem and self-confidence they need to continue building loving and supportive relationships all their lives.</p>
<p>6. <i>So today's focus is on imaginary play? Why?</i></p>	<p>Young children learn by imagining and doing. Have you ever watched a child pick up a stone and pretend it is a zooming car, or hop across the floor as if it were a bunny? In these cases, the child is using an object to represent something else while</p>

<p>7. <i>What skills does it develop?</i></p>	<p>giving it action and motion. Encourage your child to use her imagination — it's not just fun, but builds learning skills too! Pretend play is not as simple as it may seem. The process of pretending builds skills in many essential developmental areas.</p> <p>Imaginative and creative play is a more natural way for children to learn about the world and involves the whole body. Children manipulate and touch various play materials. They express themselves through play both verbally and non-verbally. They use all of their muscles and senses to move around. Actively using their large and small muscles as well as their different senses in play, children develop healthy, strong, and complete neurological connections in their brains.</p> <p>When your child engages in pretend (or dramatic) play, he is actively experimenting with the social and emotional roles of life. Through cooperative play, he learns how to take turns, share responsibility, and creatively problem-solve. When your child pretends to be different characters, he has the experience of "walking in someone else's shoes," which helps teach the</p>
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<p>8. <i>How are thinking skills developed through pretend play?</i></p>	<p>important moral development skill of empathy.</p> <p>He or she is also developing important thinking and language skills so important for later learning and life success.</p> <p>Pretend play is not, as some parents and teachers fear, a waste of time; in fact it is the best predictor of a child's capacity for creative thinking and future social success. When children are playing, they are developing symbolic thinking skills. This means that they are now able to let one thing (like a bowl) represent another (like a hat). Symbolic thinking is a critical skill that children will need to learn to read and write and for math and science. They are also beginning to understand logic and make logical connections in their play—for example, pretending to “swim” across the living room and then telling you they are wet and need to “dry off” with a blanket.</p> <p>Pretend play also provides your child with a variety of problems to solve. Whether it's two children wanting to play the same role or searching for the just right material to make a roof for the playhouse, your child calls upon important cognitive thinking skills</p>
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<p>9. <i>And how are language skills developed?</i></p>	<p>that he will use in every aspect of his life, now and forever.</p> <p>Have you ever listened in as your child engages in imaginary play with his toys or friends? You will probably hear some words and phrases you never thought he knew! In fact, we often hear our own words reflected in the play of children. Kids can do a perfect imitation of mom, dad, and the teacher! Pretend play helps your child understand the power of language.</p>
<p>10. <i>When do children start doing pretend play?</i></p>	<p>We begin to see early forms of pretend play at or even before age 2 when children assign an object (say, a block) to represent something else (perhaps a cell phone). And actual tools, such as a spoon or baby bottle, may also be used, to feed dolls or stuffed animals, for example. By 4, rich imaginary play is often flourishing. It is often interactive, and there is an unfolding story. Roles are assigned: "I'll be the teacher and you be the student." As the complexity increases, kids may spend more time establishing the plot and assigning the roles than in the actual play.</p>

<p><i>11. So by the time they are three and four, children will be starting to use their imaginations in their play?</i></p>	<p>Yes for example s toy broom is not just for sweeping. It becomes a dance partner or a horse. As toddlers approach 3, they play more with peers, making up stories and “rules” for their games. Pretend play also helps them work through difficult experiences, like saying good-bye to a parent at child care.</p>
<p><i>12. Can you describe this, what this play looks like and the learning that might be happening?</i></p>	<p>Yes – Imagine a mom Tanya and her almost three year old daughter Maria. Tanya is watching her daughter, Maria, play with her friend Ben. They are pretending to be kittens. Mom helped them draw whiskers using her makeup. Their tails were once stockings. Maria and Ben crawl around on all fours and “meow.” Tanya sets a shoebox “bowl” of imaginary milk on the floor. “You’ll have to take turns like nice kitties do.” Maria and Ben giggle in between slurps. Maria then notices that Ben’s tail is longer. “I want the big tail!” she shouts as she grabs it. Tanya steps in: “Stop, Maria. You cannot take Ben’s tail!” Tanya decides to redirect them by suggesting they make new tails out of paper that they can decorate. Maria and Ben happily get to work.</p>

<p>13. <i>How Can You Encourage Your Child to Play Imaginatively and Creatively?</i></p>	<p>When Tanya the mom joins Maria and Ben in play, she helps them develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Creativity</i> as they make their kitty costumes.• <i>Language skills</i> as they talk together while they play.• <i>Sharing and self control skills</i> as they take turns “drinking” their milk and when Tanya helps Maria understand limits.• <i>Problem-solving skills</i> as Tanya helps them work through the tail crisis.• <i>An understanding of symbols</i> as they use the shoebox in place of a bowl. This will help them get ready to learn skills that require symbolic thinking like reading and math. <p>While your preschooler, no doubt, has a wonderful imagination and is busy fighting bad guys and pretending to be a cat every day, a great way to encourage imaginative play is to set up a safe play space that is child-friendly and stock it with things that will spark your child’s imagination and creativity. Some things that one should try and have are:</p> <p>A dress-up box. Try to provide old clothing</p>
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<p>14. <i>Are there other things that you need?</i></p>	<p>and props (handbags, pirate patches, veils, jewellery, light sabre) that will your child can use to play and make up stories.</p> <p>A recycling box. Keep empty containers, cereal boxes and milk cartons, and your preschooler will be able to turn these lot into a supermarket, or shop or even tools and houses. Remember props don't have to be expensive – you can make a lot from recycled things. Boxes can be used for houses, forts, castles, barns, schools, stoves, etc. Smaller boxes, blocks of wood, or Lego can be used for furniture, cars, airplanes, etc. Natural items such as stones and pieces of wood can be used as rocks, fences, vegetation, etc. Old socks can be used as puppets; sew on buttons, glue on hair, or draw on features.</p> <p>Paper, pencils, crayons, glue. These are all must-have items for making things, playing school etc.</p> <p>Building blocks. What can't you make with building blocks? These are just simple wooden blocks that you can make quite cheaply and can be used to build towers, cities, walls....</p> <p>And if possible a secret spot.</p>
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<p><i>15. What is a secret spot?</i></p>	<p>All children benefit from having a little quiet spot tucked out of the way - behind the sofa, under the kitchen table, a hidey-hole in a garden bush, down the side passage – that will allow her to conjure up her own magnificent world without you being involved. If you are living in a very small space it is still possible to create a special spot, but hanging a sheet over a chair, or bringing home some old cardboard boxes and creating a hiding space.</p>
<p><i>16. Are there other things parents should be doing to encourage creative imaginary play?</i></p>	<p>Importantly children also need a clean and organized space for play. Not everyone has a big space in their house for this, but just ensuring that your child has a shelf or box for their toys is really important – and then helping them always tidy up at the end of playtime are good things to do.</p> <p>Also remember to make play a social activity. Older toddlers are eager for playmates. Earlier, they may have been content to play side-by-side other children. You are probably seeing your child play with peers by acting out stories, , or negotiating who gets to throw the ball first. Don't forget, your toddler and his friends still need your help as they learn to share and resolve disagreements</p>

<p><i>17. I know in play you often see a lot of disagreements between children. How do you handle this?</i></p>	<p>If your child is playing with other children, your job is to supervise the play. Don't expect to leave them on their own and that things will go smoothly without you, especially with younger children or mixed age groups. You will need to monitor the play and intervene before things get out of control and tempers are lost between the playmates. You may want to remove certain special toys ahead of time to prevent conflict over this special toy. Monitoring your children's play is an important job where you as a parent can step in and help children learn problem-solving skills to find a mutually agreeable solution.</p> <p>Keep in mind however that, you don't want to be too restrictive and intrusive if your child is playing with someone else. Social play with other children is one of your child's main ways of learning to interact with others in the world. Allow children to work things out themselves up to a certain point before you intervene. However, you need to intervene immediately if there is any name-calling, teasing, excluding, physical aggression, or dangerous play.</p>

Conclusion

Imaginative play is essential for children's development. Create spaces in your home and lives for children to pretend and imagine. And remember that child initiated play is better than adult initiated play – follow your child's lead

Learning outcomes

After listening to this show the audience should:

- Understand the value and impact of imaginative play
- Encourage and allow ample time for free-play for children while supporting stimulation through conversation and providing some props
- Create spaces that support the development of creative thinking through imaginative play
- Allow children to initiate their own play