**A Letter from Play**

**Dear Parents,**

**It’s me, Play.**

We have not spent much time together lately. When you were a kid, we were together all the time: riding Big Wheels, sculpting stuff out of play dough, building moon bases out of blocks, and squishing mud.

Heck, we were together all the time.

Remember when you were told to “quit playing with your vegetables and eat them”?

How about all the times you heard someone yell that “goofing around with those toys is *not* going to get that pigsty-of-a-mess you call a bedroom cleaned up!”

Or how we had so much fun on car trips—until the order to “stop the silliness back there!” boomed from the front seat?  Back then, all you wanted to do was hang out with me. Those were good times. Remember how that big slide burnt your legs, but you could just not stop going down over and over again?

Anyway, I’m not writing to relive old times (although it would be great to get together some time).   I’m writing about your kids. I don’t see them that much and I’m worried. They’re MIA. From what I hear, their days are full of adult-led activities, screen time, and academics. They don’t even play in the back seat like you used to—they’re plugged into a DVR watching something “educational”.

I know you want the best for them—you want them to get ahead in life and be ready for whatever it tosses at them. You’re scared that if you don’t push them a bit they will not “be ready”. You feel there is learning to be done and that there is not time for your old buddy, Play.

You’re also under a lot of peer pressure to do what other parents are doing. If the kid down the street can’t climb trees or get messy and is shuttled between academic preschool, dance, karate, a traveling soccer team, and a foreign language class you’d look like a bad parent if your kid just ran the neighbourhood half naked and covered in mud having adventures the way you did back in the day.

I get the Fear and the Pressure, but it’s getting a bit intense. You’re expecting things out of your kids that are not developmentally appropriate—things most of them are not cognitively or physiologically ready for. You’re expecting *them* to do things at the age of 3 that *you* did not learn to do until the age of 5 or 6.

The thing is, *I’m* the answer. If you want your kids to be ready for whatever life throws in their path, if you want them to be able to thrive in an ever-changing world, if you want them to be creative, and knowledgeable, and well-adjusted– *I’m the answer*. Me, your old buddy, Play.

I don’t want to brag, but the fact is I’m an evolutionary strategy that lots of creatures use to learn about, and survive in, their worlds. Puppies, chimps, whales, elephants, tigers—the list is huge. They all use me, Play, as a strategy for gathering information about their surroundings, sorting things out, gaining understanding, and so much more.

Don’t take my word for it; there is plenty of research showing that I’m a better choice for young kids than learning videos, flashcards, worksheets, and adult-led academic settings. Here’s a link to a list of resource my buddies Jeff and Denita complied for their book, *Let Them Play*. Check it out when you have time (and *please* make the time).

Right now, I’m just asking you to relax a bit. Let them play. Let them enjoy their childhoods. Stop rushing them. Stop pushing them.

And you…you could use some more of me too. How about right now? Go on, grab that big fluffy towel from the bathroom, tie it around your neck, and see if you can still fly off the third step the way you used to. It’ll be fun.

Hope to see you (and your kids) soon!

Your Buddy,  Play

[www.explorationsearlylearning.com](http://www.explorationsearlylearning.com)

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jeffajohnson@cableone.net

[www.jeffajohnson.com](http://www.jeffajohnson.com)