

Why Parents Should Play With Their Children

Recently, I've come to a realisation: I need to play more with my 10-month old daughter. When she was little, I would put her in her bouncer or on her mat, within view of me and whatever I was doing. Now that she's crawling, she follows me as I move around the house doing this and that. But while she might whine for my attention, I noticed that the moment I sit down on the ground with her or show her some toys, she is immediately content.

I noticed the same thing while visiting a friend last week. Her three-month old son was being fussy in his bouncer as we sat and talked. But the minute she put him beside her, he grabbed her thumbs and was as happy as Larry. All these babies want is to hang out! And really, playing is a beneficial thing for both parents and kids:

It's a chance to stop

Our lives keep getting busier and busier, and if we don't watch out, they'll just fly by in a flutter of feeding, laundry, and sleeping schedules. One of the best things about breastfeeding is that you're forced to sit and put everything else aside while baby feeds. Playing, even for 10 minutes, can be this new time to stop and focus. And doesn't research show that a more collected mind makes for a happier parent?

Enjoy your kids

There's so much joy that comes from being around kids, but if we don't actively remember this, we'll spend our days frustrated at all the things they do. I find that stopping to play with my daughter helps me to see the little things that

bring me joy, and then recall them easily when she's having a naughty day. It gives me time to notice her cheeky grin, her funny singing, the new things she can do from day to day. Before we know it, she'll be grown up and independent, and I'll be wishing for more time like this with her!

It's practice in giving them our full attention

I read something just yesterday that entrepreneur and motivational speaker Dale Partridge posted on his Facebook page: *'A friend of mine has 10 children and he told me, "Listen to anything your children want to tell you. Because if you don't listen to the little stuff when they're little, they won't tell you the big stuff when they are big." Remember, to our kids every conversation is a big conversation. Your heart isn't transferred in just the love that you give them but the willingness to stop and eagerly hear them.'*

This is so true! It reminds me of something I remember hearing about my dad: that even when we were little, if we were trying to tell him something, he'd stop what he was doing, come down to our level, and have a conversation with us. He and my mum treated us with respect, and as such I've always had no problems with sharing things with them even as I've gotten older. This is why I think that sitting and playing, before my daughter can talk, is good practice for me to be able to give her my time in the future.

Play with dad, and play with mum, teaches different things

I've seen it quite clearly with my daughter: I generally play with her quite calmly and using her toys, while with her dad it's all rough-and-tumble and lots of laughs. More and more, research is showing how both types of play are important for a

child's emotional and social development. Mum's and dad's styles may be miles apart but one thing is clear here: playing with your child is a good thing, for both learning and bonding purposes.

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