

INFORMATION SHEET



Just 4 Tots FDC

EARLY CHILDHOOD: MORE THAN JUST PLAYING

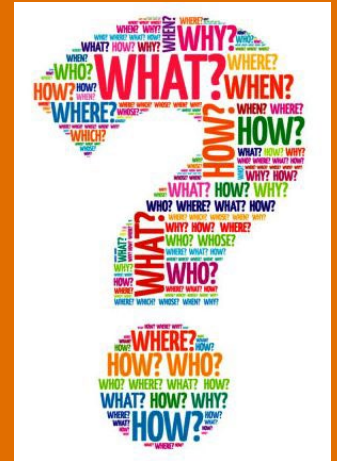
Do you view early childhood as a place where children are simply looked after rather than an educational setting? If you want to get a reaction from an early childhood educator, tell them they, have it easy because they “play all day”. Why does this thinking illicit such a strong reaction from those in the know?

There is more research than I can quote here that highlights the importance of the first 5 years of a child’s life and brain development. In fact, in the first 5 years of a child’s life their brain develops at a pace that is not experienced again in their lives. Most of this development happens as they build relationships and learn through play. Notice the wording there “**LEARN**” through play. Nowhere in the research does it say, “just play”.

Have you ever thought about how what they learn in their early childhood settings translates into real skills later in life? I’m not talking ABCs or 123s here (although they are equally as important) but rather, what life-skills are they learning? What are the long-term benefits of **LEARNING** through play? I recently came across a graphic that showed some of the skills the children learn while participating in their day in early childhood settings. It got me thinking, on how I can extend that graphic to highlight the skills that we, as early childhood educators, lay the groundwork for every day. What essential life skills are being introduced, nurtured, and encouraged while the children **LEARN** through play in their early childhood settings?

The list on the following pages, is by no means an exhaustive list and more skills overlap across all the areas mentioned. What it does provide is an opportunity for our society to see that early childhood educators are the cornerstone to education. Without them laying down the groundwork, our schoolteachers (who are already doing so much for our children) would really have the work cut out for them!

“Early childhood education is the key to the betterment of society.”
(Maria Montessori)



Do you have a question?

If you have a question or would like more information about child development or early childhood education, please feel free to drop us an email at just4totsfdc@outlook.com and we will do our best to provide you with answers!

Lifelong Skills that can be LEARNT through play

Being a respectful role-model:

- **Trustworthiness:** Respectful role models are typically seen as trustworthy individuals. Trust is a fundamental component of adult relationships, whether in friendships, romantic partnerships, or professional collaborations.
- **Well-being and Mental Health:** Experiencing respect and modeling it in early childhood can contribute to emotional well-being and mental health. Children who grow up in respectful environments are more likely to prioritize their mental well-being in adulthood, seeking and providing support when needed.
- **Community Engagement:** Respectful role models often demonstrate a sense of responsibility and civic engagement. Children who observe and participate in these activities are more likely to engage in community involvement and advocacy as adults.

Participating in group activities or group times:

- **Empathy and Compassion:** Interacting with peers in a group setting allows children to develop empathy and compassion as they understand the feelings and perspectives of others. These qualities contribute to more empathetic and compassionate behavior as adults, which can enhance personal relationships and community involvement.
- **Independence and Interdependence:** Group time often strikes a balance between individual contributions and working as part of a team. This helps children learn when to be independent and when to rely on others. These lessons in independence and interdependence can be useful in adult life, where individuals must navigate personal autonomy and cooperation.
- **Adaptability:** Group activities may involve changing roles, rules, or situations, teaching children to adapt and be flexible. Adaptability is a valuable skill in adulthood, as individuals often face unexpected changes and challenges in their personal and professional lives.

Building Secure Relationships:

- **Communication Skills:** Learning alongside others often involves interaction and communication. Children who engage in these activities develop effective communication skills, which are essential in personal and professional relationships as adults.
- **Collaboration and Teamwork:** Learning with peers fosters collaboration and teamwork. These skills are highly valued in adult contexts, including the workplace, where individuals often need to work together to achieve common goals.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Interactions with others in childhood provide opportunities to practice conflict resolution skills. Adults who are adept at resolving conflicts peacefully are better

“In the first few years of life, more than one million neural connections are formed each second – a pace never repeated again.”
(UNICEF)

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www.just4totsfdc.com
just4totsfdc@outlook.com
[0425 248 395](tel:0425248395)

Lifelong Skills that can be LEARNT through play

Remembering a new routine:

- **Executive Function Skills:** Learning and remembering routines in childhood require the development of executive function skills, such as planning, organizing, and task initiation. These skills are essential for setting goals, managing time, and making decisions as an adult.
- **Time Management:** Following routines involves adhering to schedules and timelines. This early experience with time management can translate into better time management skills in adulthood, which are essential for balancing work, family, and personal life.
- **Responsibility and Accountability:** Routines often involve responsibilities, like completing chores, homework, or daily tasks. Remembering and fulfilling these responsibilities in childhood can instill a sense of accountability that carries over into adulthood, promoting reliability and commitment in various areas of life.
- **Memory and Learning:** Remembering and following routines enhance memory and learning skills. This foundation for memory can aid in acquiring new knowledge and skills throughout life, which is essential for personal and professional development.

Regulating feelings & Resilience

- **Emotional Regulation:** Early childhood is a critical period for learning how to identify, understand, and manage emotions. Children who acquire emotional regulation skills are better equipped to manage stress, anxiety, and emotional challenges in adulthood. They can respond to difficult situations more calmly and make rational decisions.
- **Effective Coping Mechanisms:** Children who learn to cope with difficult emotions and situations in healthy ways are less likely to resort to harmful coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse or risky behaviors, in adulthood. They are more likely to have healthy outlets for stress and negative emotions.
- **Stress Management:** Early experiences in managing stress can translate into effective stress management skills as adults. These skills are crucial for maintaining mental and physical health in the face of life's demands.
- **Healthy Relationships:** Emotional regulation and resilience contribute to healthier interpersonal relationships. Adults who have these skills are better equipped to communicate, resolve conflicts, and maintain positive relationships with friends, family, and partners.
- **Decision-Making:** The ability to regulate emotions and manage stress can enhance decision-making skills. Adults who are emotionally resilient are more likely to make thoughtful, rational decisions rather than being driven solely by emotions.
- **Mental Health:** Early development of emotional regulation and resilience can promote good mental health practices in adulthood. Individuals with these skills are more likely to seek help when needed, reducing the stigma associated with mental health issues.

“Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child’s soul.”
(Friedrich Froebel)

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Lifelong Skills that can be LEARNT through play

Participating in Intentional Teaching:

- **Critical Thinking:** Intentional teaching encourages children to think critically, analyze information, and make informed decisions. These skills are crucial in adult life for problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluating complex situations.
- **Curiosity and Lifelong Learning:** Engaging in intentional teaching activities nurtures curiosity and a love of learning. These qualities promote a commitment to lifelong learning, which is essential for personal and professional growth throughout adulthood.
- **Problem-Solving:** Many intentional teaching activities involve problem-solving tasks that challenge children to find creative solutions. These problem-solving skills are valuable in adult life for overcoming obstacles and addressing complex issues.
- **Creativity and Innovation:** Encouragement of creative thinking in intentional teaching activities can foster a creative mindset that is valuable for problem-solving and innovation in adult life.

Self-Help Skills

- **Self-Care:** Early self-help skills include personal hygiene and health routines. These habits contribute to good self-care practices in adulthood, promoting physical and mental well-being.
- **Organization and Planning:** Self-help skills involve planning and organization, such as laying out clothes for the next day. These skills can translate into effective organizational and planning abilities in adult life, both at home and in the workplace.
- **Self-Discipline:** Self-help routines require self-discipline and consistency. Children who practice self-discipline in early childhood are more likely to exhibit self-control and follow through on commitments as adults.
- **Healthy Habits:** Self-help skills often involve maintaining healthy habits, like brushing teeth or eating balanced meals. These early habits can contribute to lifelong health and well-being.
- **Empowerment:** Learning self-help skills empowers children to take control of their lives and make choices. This empowerment mindset can lead to assertiveness and autonomy in adulthood.
- **Life Skills:** Self-help skills lay the foundation for broader life skills such as budgeting, cooking, and home maintenance. These skills are essential for independent living in adulthood.

Being Kind

- **Cooperation and Teamwork:** Kindness often involves cooperation and working well with others. These skills are essential in adult life for collaborating in teams, managing relationships, and achieving common goals.
- **Leadership:** Kind individuals often become leaders or role models in their peer groups. These early leadership experiences can develop leadership skills that are valuable in adult contexts, such as leading teams, organizations, or community initiatives.
- **Respect for Diversity:** Acts of kindness often involve respecting and appreciating differences. Learning to embrace diversity during childhood can promote open-mindedness and inclusivity in adulthood, leading to more enriching and diverse relationships.

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