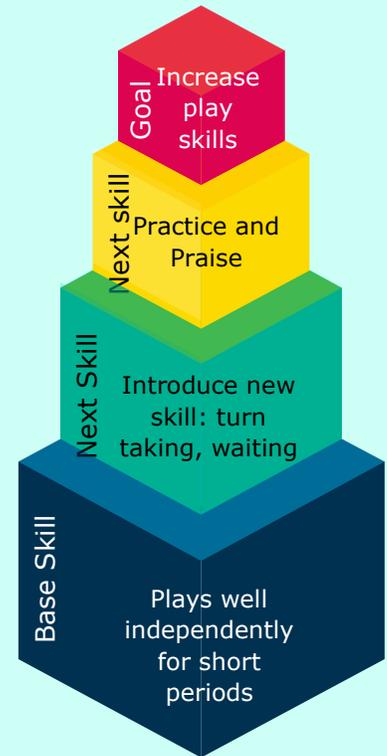




A STEP AHEAD

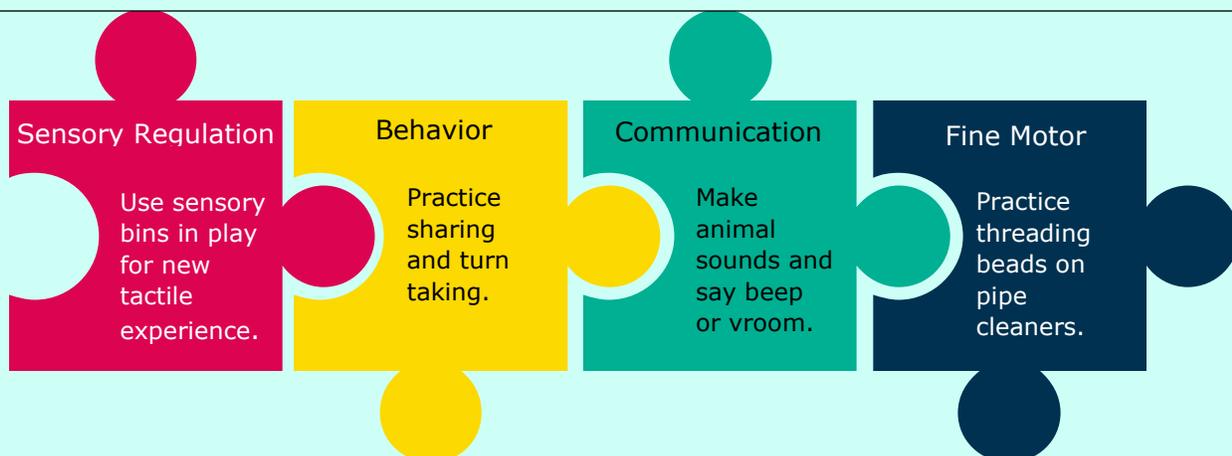
Learning Through Play

“Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.”-Fred Rogers



Children, especially toddlers, use play time to practice new skills and play out ideas. It is important to allow room in a daily schedule for play. This can be outside or inside, can be with a game or structured play item or even with kitchen items and recycling! We often set aside time or look into how to teach kids how to identify colors or animals or practice counting but we rarely set aside time to practice play skills. Kids needs grown-ups to help show them how to take play to a next level or how to practice a new skill. Here's a couple examples: Kids will often know how to stack blocks and knock them down, but once they've mastered that skill they may appear bored or you may see acting out behaviors like throwing the blocks. It can be helpful to expand their play ideation by showing them that they can make a track with blocks for cars to drive over, or we can pretend blocks are ice cubes in a cup or food for a baby doll.

The next example is how to use play to practice a life skill: Monique has been having a hard time sharing toys with her brother. Her caregivers can set aside 5-10 minutes to use dolls or animals to practice sharing. Caregivers can praise or correct the doll or animal without it feeling personal to Monique. Monique is able to see how the situation plays out without an emotional tie to the situation.



Stages of Play:

Solitary (0-2 years): Play alone, little interaction with others

Spectator (2-2.5 years): Watch other children, do not join in

Parallel (2.5-3 years): Play alongside others but not together

Associative (3-4 years): Interact with others, preferred playmates

Cooperative (4+ years): Play together, shared goals

Troubleshooting Tips:

During play time, try to ignore minor misbehaviors such as having an "attitude" or crashing cars. Instead, use praise when you see them behaving as you would like. If the child is being harmful or destructive you can end the playtime and explain you can try playtime again another time.

References:

https://pcit.ucdavis.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/28_PRIDEskills-visual-learners5.16.pdf

<http://www.kathrynbruin.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/StagesofPlayTYPE>

Research shows spending 5 minutes per day playing 1:1 with toddlers using these skills can increase social skills, communication skills and attachment:

PRIDE Skills:

P: Praise, use specific praise for behaviors you want to see again.

"Great job waiting!"

R: Reflect, show the child you are paying attention by repeating their words. Child "up, up, up" Caregiver:

"Yes, the car went up!"

I: Imitate, shows interest in what the child is doing by playing with the same materials in the same manner.

D: Describe, can help slow a child down and increase concentration.

"You're keeping the play doh on the table".

E: Enjoy, "I'm having so much fun with you".

Resources:

The Busy Toddler on Instagram

Happy Toddler Playtime on Instagram

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/support-learning-with-play>

<http://www.hanen.org/helpful-info/articles/the-land-of-make-believe.aspx>