**Building attachment through play**

Attachment is an important part of children development and provides a foundation for children to learn how to trust others and build healthy relationships. To become securely attached, children need a dependable adult who responds to their needs. One simple way to help a child build trust, security and attachment is through play. Playful activities can reduce stress, strengthen attachment, and solve behavior problems while bringing laughter and joy to you and the child.

Often children who come from hard places have not been able to form secure attachments due to the abuse and neglect that occurred in their biological home, therefor foster parents need to create conditions that reestablish security. Attachment play is a special kind of play that is designed to promote healing during difficult times in a child’s life.

**Attachment Play**

Attachment play is an interactive play technique that strengthens your connections with your children. Attachment play often involves laughter. Laughter is a very beneficial component of play because it reduces tension, anxiety, and anger. Laughing with your children can help resolve many discipline problems and help children heal from stress and trauma. Attachment play can be child initiated or adult initiated. Attachment play does not require any special equipment. Many play activities do not require equipment at all and be done with toys or objects that you already have in your home. Attachment play can take place anywhere at and time. Activities can be done in the car, on the playground, or at bedtime. Attachment play includes familiar activities such as peek-a-boo and pretend play. Attachment play is NOT permissive discipline, does NOT teach aggression to children, is NOT a form of teasing, does NOT involve competition and does NOT have any set rules.

**Guidelines for Attachment play**

1. Follow the child’s lead: Child directed play is when the child leads and directs the play activity. Research shows that child directed play can build a child’s self-direction and self-confidence. Child directed play also fosters language and social development. It allows the child to receive focused attention from you without having to misbehave to get it. Child directed play strengthens your parent child bond and gives you an opportunity to practice parenting skills.
2. This is not a time to teach or correct: While engaging in attachment play and child lead activities this is not a time for you to teach or correct. There are no set rules in child directed play, as long as the activity is not harmful to the child or anyone else, allow the child to lead the play activity and try to accept what and how the child wants to play.
3. Laughing means you are on the right track: Laughing indicates that you and the child are enjoying your time together and attachment and bonding are taking place.
4. Teasing is not attachment play: Do not tease or belittle and avoid sarcasm during play. Children often don’t understand sarcasm and take sarcastic comments seriously. Child might laugh at a sarcastic or belittling statement, but its mostly out of embarrassment or confusion.
5. Avoid tickling: Some children do not enjoy being tickled. Children who come from abuse and neglect often do not feel comfortable with touch.
6. Don’t use attachment play when the child is upset or crying: Attachment play should be an enjoyable activity, if the child is upset wait until the child is calmed down and in a better mood to engage in play activities.
7. Free from distractions: Put away your phone, turn off the TV and avoid other tasks while engaging in play activities. It is important for the child to receive undivided attention from you during play activities. If children feel that you are distracted and not giving them the attention that they seek, they could lose interest in the play activity and may not be as willing to participate next time.

**Types of attachment play**

Nondirective child centered play - child centered play is when the child is given freedom of expression to play however they want and with whatever items they want without being judge by the adult. The parent will sit with the child, giving them plenty of room to engage freely. The parent then engages by noticing and describing what the child is doing during the play activity. For example, the parent might say “The red fire truck is driving really fast.” This kind of play allows the child to enjoy the attention they are receiving from the parent. Symbolic play – This is when the child uses objects to represent other objects. For example, speaking into a banana as if it were a telephone or turning an empty cereal bowl into a steering wheel. Symbolic play can help a child improve cognitive skills, social emotional skills, motor skills and language skills. Power-reversal games – Help children release feelings around powerlessness and lack of choice. In these games, the roles are reversed so that the adult is the one who is less powerful. For example, when playing “school” the child is the teacher and reads to the adult or gives the adult assignments to complete. This is fun for the child, and they feel powerful which helps to release the feelings of not being powerful in the past. Nonsense games- Sometimes children feel frustrated because they see adults easily completing tasks that they can’t do on their own yet. To help them release these feelings we can be silly and nonsensical. Like when we are helping a young child get dressed, we can pretend that we think their pants go over their head, or their shirt goes on their legs. The child starts laughing and helps him to let out his uncomfortable feelings of not being able to do things on their own. This also creates connection between you and the child. Separation games – Often times children struggle with separation. Games like Peek a boo and hide and go seek can help children learn the process of being apart and coming back together again.

**10 activities that encourage attachment**

1)Hide and seek – develops object permanency. 2) Give a pillow ride – Have your child sit on a big floor pillow as you drag them around the room. Only move when the child gives you eye contact. 3) Play a tunnel activity – Parents start by kneeling on the floor to form a tunnel then have the child crawl through the tunnel before it collapses. 4) Go Swimming 5) Guess the goodies – Put several small treats in a bag, then have the child close their eyes and put their hand in the bag to guess the objects. 6) Play a memory game- leave the room and change something about your self and have the child guess what you changed 7) Create a pillow maze 8) Build a blanket forte 9) Play musical instruments 10) Dance

[Promoting Attachment through Play (scoe.org)](https://www.scoe.org/files/FilpHanke-Promoting-Attachment-Through-Play.pdf) , [attachmentplaysample.pdf (awareparenting.com)](http://www.awareparenting.com/attachmentplaysample.pdf)

**Between Families Newsletter  
Training Questions  
Building attachment through play**

**October 2021**

**Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONAIRRE FOR ½ HOUR CREDIT AND SUBMIT TO YOUR ASSIGNED FOSTER CARE WORKER**

1. Attachment is an important part of children development and provides a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for children to learn how to trust others and build healthy relationships.
2. What kind of play is an interactive play technique that strengthens your connection with your child ?
3. Secure play B) Attachment Play C) Bonding play D)Connection play
4. True or False: Laughter is a very beneficial component of play because it reduces tension, anxiety, and anger.
5. Laughing with your children can help resolve many discipline problems and help children heal from   
   \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
6. List three things that Attachment play is not.

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1. Why should you not use teasing or sarcasm in attachment play?
2. What do you need to do to be free from distractions while engaging in attachment play?
3. True or False: Child centered play is when the child is given freedom of expression to play however they want and with whatever items they want without being judge by the adult.
4. Give an example of a symbolic play activity
5. List 3 Play activities that encourage attachment