

Let the Children Play

- ❖ Through the universal medium of play children learn what no one can teach them (Hockenberry, 2004).
- ❖ Play is the child's natural medium of self expression; an opportunity to play out feelings of tension, insecurity, fear, aggression, confusion, happiness, love etc.
- ❖ The Functions of Play are:- Sensorimotor Development, Intellectual Development, Intellectual Development, Socialization, Creativity, Self Awareness, Therapeutic Value, Moral Value.
- ❖ Through sensorimotor play children can explore the world around them.
- ❖ Intellectual play helps in developing language skills, helps children understand the world around them and recognize the difference between fantasy and reality (Hockenberry, 2004).
- ❖ Socialisation helps children learn to give and take. Children also learn right from wrong and taking responsibility for their actions.
- ❖ Creativity is primarily a solitary activity; yet creative thinking is often enhanced in group settings where listening to others stimulates ones own ideas. Children transfer this creative interest to situations outside the world of play (Hockenberry, 2004).
- ❖ Through play children can test their abilities to assume and try out various roles and to learn the effect their behaviour has on others (Hockenberry, 2004).
- ❖ Play is therapeutic at any age. With play children can express various emotions (Hockenberry, 2004).
- ❖ Provisions of Play: - Play Things, Play Space, Play Time, Play Fellows.
- ❖ Play Things: - appropriate age and stage of growth development, to provide stimulus for learning.
- ❖ Play Space: - area must be safe and free from hazards.
- ❖ Play Time: - adequate time for play must be given. Interruption may cause frustration.
- ❖ Play Fellows: - children under two years of age play alone but as social communication improves children look for group play.

- ❖ Types of Play: - Hockenberry (2004) describes six different types of play. These are: - Social Affective Play, Sense Pleasure Play, Skill Play, and Unoccupied behaviour, Dramatic or Pretend Play and Games.
- ❖ Social affective play is where play begins. Infants take pleasure being in the company of people.
- ❖ Sense pleasure play is a non social stimulating experience. Light, colour, tastes, odours, textures and consistencies attract their attention.
- ❖ Skill play occurs after infants develop the ability to grasp and manipulate. For instance in block building or manipulating pencils for drawing.
- ❖ Unoccupied behaviour is when children are not 'playful' but focusing their attention on anything that gets their attention.
- ❖ Pretend play is one of the essential elements in children's process of identification. Pretend begins as early as 12 months and becomes more complex as the child gets older.
- ❖ Games can be engaged alone or with others. Preschoolers do not like competitive games and prefer for instance ring around a rosie. Younger children will prefer peek-a-boo. Competitive games with rules can start at 4 years of age. Examples are running, football, gymnastics, and board games etc.
- ❖ Social character of play: Infants are egocentric but as they get older this changes as their concern for others increases. Interaction with peers and the increase of conceptual abilities and social skills enables children to increase participation with others in the following types of play (Hockenberry, 2004).
- ❖ Onlooker play is when children watch what others are doing but no make no attempt to participate, like for instance watching an older sibling.
- ❖ Solitary play is when children play alone with different toys used by others.
- ❖ Parallel play is when children play independently but among other children. Each child will play with the same toys but will not use them alike or be influenced on how to use them.
- ❖ Associative play is when children act independently but follows a similar or identical activity.
- ❖ Cooperative play is organised and children play in a group with other children. There is a sense of belonging within the group.

- ❖ Through play the child formulates information and learns the ability to explore and discover.
- ❖ Play helps the child to complete self realisation which helps towards maturity, independence, and self direction; under supervision.
- ❖ Play helps to structure an individual's personality. The individual is changing all the time.
- ❖ Play is good therapy for children who feel miserable, unhappy, and are fighting to establish a relationship.
- ❖ Play gives a feeling of mental health and a sense of happiness.
- ❖ Play gives the opportunity to assess a child's development and potentials.
- ❖ Play can help as occupational therapy in situations when the child is in the hospital, to aid relief of pain and freedom of stress.
- ❖ Children in hospital are encouraged to bring their favourite toy. This provides security and a link to home. It can also be used for role playing.
- ❖ Play is a natural part of childhood, a vital factor in the social, intellectual, physical and emotional growth of children and a source of great pleasure. For the sick child play serves an even more important purpose. It both satisfies the child's normal need to play and helps to adapt to a potentially stressful situation (Peterson, 1989).

Key reference:-

Hockenberry, M.J (2004) Wong's Essentials of Paediatric Nursing 7th Edition
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