

Using Play as a Coping Strategy in Times of Disaster

International Play Association (www.ipaworld.org)

General Information:

The primary purpose of The International Play Association (www.ipaworld.org) is to protect, preserve, and promote play as a fundamental right for all children. Play makes possible the maximum development of self and society by facilitating creativity, individuality, and social, physical and intellectual growth. Play can also serve as a medium for children to better cope with natural emergencies and disasters.

The International Play Association is an international non-governmental organization, founded in Denmark in 1961. It is interdisciplinary and embraces in membership, persons of all professions working for or with children. Our membership is open to any individual, group or organization that endorses the United Nations' Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959), especially Article 7, paragraph 3, which states:

"The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation which should be directed to the same purposes as education; society and the public authorities shall endeavor to promote the enjoyment of this right;" and endorses its belief in Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990). The Association is governed by an elected Board of Directors, and a World Council consisting of members from more than 40 countries who assist in governing the association.

How can IPA assist in the establishment of an action plan and work in a partnership capacity?

A. Proposed Project One: Supply website information that shows parents how to work with natural objects, such as sand, water, wood, mud, twigs, and a variety of safe materials that young children can use to create their own playthings in times of emergencies.

This proposal is based on the premise that early parents, worldwide, used natural resources to create playthings for their children.

Examples:

Many early mothers, worldwide, taught their young children skills related to (a) weaving baskets, mats, and toy boats from reeds, (b) showed the children how to peel and carve creative shapes and designs from fruits, (c) played guessing games involving fortune telling involving the seeds from fruits, (d) constructed small balls from feathers, beans and stretched leather, (e) designed chains and necklaces and other children=s jewelry from flowers and weeds, (f) created rag dolls and puppets from swaths of clot and oversized vegetables or gourds (g) used sea shells or pressed flowers to decorate gift boxes, and played (h) a variety of string games.

Attention was also given to making simple (i) homemade instruments, (j) utilizing the child's math skills when they had children sort, match, or sequence natural objectives such as twigs or rocks. Mothers also exposed their children to the (k) fun of engineering and science when they encouraged their children to (l) build miniature dam and rivers in sandboxes, or have their children (m) transfer liquid from container to container and gain an understanding of volume and characteristics of weight. Mothers also realized that their children could (n) develop their artistic abilities by playing with natural materials such as mud or clay since children love to pinch, pound, poke and roll clay or other pliable materials to create forms and shapes.

Many early fathers, worldwide, demonstrated their respect for nature by teaching the young child basic skills related to (a) bird watching or star gazing (b) knot tying, (c) carving soft wood to create jigsaw puzzles, whistles, and wooden spinning tops. They also created (d) stacking blocks, (e) doll houses, (f) jump ropes, (g) cloth or paper kites, (h) sand boxes, and (i) homemade fishing poles. They exposed their children to other natural experiences such as (j) collecting leaves and polishing rocks, (k) throwing stones in ponds or other natural waters, (l) jumping over small brush or logs, (m) building castles and digging for clay to be used for simple sculptors, (n) collecting sticks, nuts or exploring insects that lived in the ground. They also captivated the child's interest with (o) story telling, (p) joke telling with long, twisting plots, followed by a humorous ending. In cold climates they showed their children a variety of (q) snow and ice activities.

Both mothers and fathers also read early children's books containing (a) fairy tales, fables, mysteries, and a large variety of (b) riddles, (c) word games, (d) simple crossword puzzles, and (e) guessing rhymes that also contained information showing how to entertain oneself. Many fairytale adventures are based in favorite outdoor environments such as wooded forests, valleys, and mountains that instill a sense of wonder and curiosity and free the child from their actual troubled environment.

As a Result:

These special play skills were passed on to the child, who later repeated the tasks in their adult life for their children. Unfortunately, today's parents worldwide have forgotten how to perform these play skills, and have relied on manufactured playthings for their children.

In times of contemporary natural disasters or emergencies, today's parents and caregivers need written information (translated in several languages and with illustrations) concerning how to make natural play objects for children who have been displaced from their normal home environment.

B. Proposed Project Two: Create a comprehensive listing of games and play activities for individuals, partners, and small groups that do not require equipment or complex rules to learn. These activities can serve as an outlet for the child's stress, and can be implemented in a variety of settings.

Sample Game Activities:

These games can also empower the child and recognize his or her natural urge for fun and adventure in a safe environment.

Sample Individual, Partner, or Small Group Activities

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Chase & Flee Games | <input type="checkbox"/> Balloon Play | <input type="checkbox"/> Ball Games |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Action Rhymes | <input type="checkbox"/> Skipping Games | <input type="checkbox"/> Hand Paddles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hiking | <input type="checkbox"/> Building Blocks | <input type="checkbox"/> Fruit Picking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Simon Says | <input type="checkbox"/> Homemade Cards | <input type="checkbox"/> Acting Out Scenarios |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Running Races | <input type="checkbox"/> Target Games | <input type="checkbox"/> Makeshift Basketball |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hopping Games | <input type="checkbox"/> Homemade Puzzles | <input type="checkbox"/> Tin Can Bowling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jumping Games | <input type="checkbox"/> Tic-Tac-Toe | <input type="checkbox"/> Modified Volleyball |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hopscotch | <input type="checkbox"/> Connect the Dots | <input type="checkbox"/> Toss & Catch |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hill Play | <input type="checkbox"/> Drawing Games | <input type="checkbox"/> Homemade Dolls
and Action Figures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Four Square | <input type="checkbox"/> Simple Art Projects | <input type="checkbox"/> Paper Bag Play |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Box Ball | <input type="checkbox"/> Mud Puddle Play | <input type="checkbox"/> Playing House |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handball | <input type="checkbox"/> Collecting Objects | <input type="checkbox"/> Digging Holes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Galloping Games | <input type="checkbox"/> Building Models | <input type="checkbox"/> Dress-Up Play |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monkey in the
Middle | <input type="checkbox"/> Sock/Hand Puppets | <input type="checkbox"/> Shadow Games |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jump Rope | <input type="checkbox"/> Puppetry | <input type="checkbox"/> Water Play |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stick Play | <input type="checkbox"/> Follow the Leader | <input type="checkbox"/> Leaf Play |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sand Play | <input type="checkbox"/> Imitation Games | <input type="checkbox"/> Scavenger Hunts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pebble Games | <input type="checkbox"/> Building with Rocks | <input type="checkbox"/> Creating Maps |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homemade Jacks | <input type="checkbox"/> Simple Dances | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kite Flying | <input type="checkbox"/> Hand Chants | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bean Bags | <input type="checkbox"/> Homemade
Instruments | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> String Games | <input type="checkbox"/> Toy Vehicles/
building roads | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homemade Frisbee | <input type="checkbox"/> Cardboard Boxes | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> King of the Hill | <input type="checkbox"/> Hunting for Bugs | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leap Frog | <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper Crafts | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guessing Games | <input type="checkbox"/> Bubble Play | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> London Bridge | <input type="checkbox"/> Molding Clay | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hide and Seek | <input type="checkbox"/> Action Songs | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Statues | <input type="checkbox"/> Homemade Boats | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homemade Tops | <input type="checkbox"/> Climbing Games | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homemade
Airplanes | <input type="checkbox"/> Modified Soccer | |

C. Proposed Project Three: Provide a comprehensive list of websites from a variety of countries that encompass playgroups located throughout the world. These websites can suggest additional resources.

Project Three: Website Resources

Sample websites follow:

www.ipausa.org

American Association for the Child's Right to Play (IPA/USA)- United States affiliate to IPA. Promotes, preserves, and protects each child's right to play. Advocates and resource for recess, afterschool play, community playdays, special needs population, obesity, playwork, playground design, and more.

<http://www.aahperd.org/aapar/>

American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation (AAPAR)- Promotes creative and active lifestyles through physical activity, recreation, and fitness for all ages. Includes resource for outdoor adventure, aquatics, special needs population.

www.bubbles.org

The Bubblesphere- Everything you want to know about bubbles including games, and bubble solution recipes.

<http://www.cloudgazing.com>

Cloud Gazing- How-to-guide to cloud gazing including photos of what our imagination helps us to see.

www.gameskidsplay.net

Games Kids Play- Playground games, jump rope rhymes, international games, historic implications.

www.ipaworld.org

International Play Association (IPA)- Parent organization with over 40 national affiliates supporting Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Play is promoted as a fundamental human right.

www.playgroundsafety.org

National Association for Playground Safety (NPPS)- Public resource for the latest information on playground safety and injury prevention and provides on-line training.

www.nwf.org/natureactivities

National Wildlife Foundation- Outdoor activities, classroom ideas, nature magazines starting at age one.

WHAT IS PLAY?

CHILDREN are the foundation of the world's future.

CHILDREN have played at all times throughout history and in all cultures.

PLAY, along with the basic needs of nutrition, health, shelter and education, is vital to develop the potential of all children.

PLAY is communication and expression, combining thought and action; it gives satisfaction and a feeling of achievement.

PLAY is instinctive, voluntary, and spontaneous.

PLAY helps children develop physically, mentally, emotionally and socially

PLAY is a means of learning to live, not a mere passing of time.

Ten reasons why play is important to the parent/ caregiver and the child during times of crisis:

1. Play is an expression of a parent's or caregiver's love toward the child and gives comfort.
2. Play can bring pleasure to both the child and the parent during extreme stressful times.
3. Play activities are meaningful to the child and supply a form of joy.
4. Children benefit from their parent's/caregiver's input during play experiences.
5. Play allows for natural and genuine praise.
6. Play is commonly used as a way to heal serious problems between parents and children.
7. Cultural values are passed on through play activities.
8. Natural play materials are usually readily available in all parts of the world.
9. The act of constructing and creating play objects involves some concentration and thought, and helps to focus the child.
10. Play offers opportunities for parents and caregivers to observe the child's coping behavior.

E. How Does Play Contribute Overall to the Child's Development?

1. Cognitive:

Play is a natural medium for learning; all children play regardless of age, culture, or physical handicaps. Through play activities children take in information about objects and people, practice new skills, create situation they can deal with and control, gain confidence in their own abilities, and learn to solve problems.

2. Social:

Children explore adult roles, learn to cope with others, and work out their feelings through make believe play. Children gain a feeling of satisfaction and joy because of the increased self concept.

3. Physical:

Physical play is essential for the child's normal healthy development. Vigorous movements help to build large muscle coordination, and stimulate the brain, lungs, and all vital organs, just as non-vigorous physical play activities such as stringing beads, cutting and pasting, and pouring develop small muscle dexterity and eye-hand coordination.

www.ipaworld.org

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