



WHY CHILDREN NEED TO PLAY

The answer is so simple that it's sometimes too difficult to grasp.

How to Teach Your Child to Take Turns

IS SUPER-HERO PLAY GOOD FOR KIDS?

Healthy from the Start!!

It's the process; Not the Product

There is NO such a thing as a Naughty Child!



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This Parenting Magazine is an internal magazine for parents with children enrolled at International Child Care Centres SmartKids and is part of our childcare service. With this magazine we will try to provide you with suitable guidance on general issue regarding early child-hood challenges from around the world but using the individual child's social and emotional development as the main compass.

Parents around the world want what they believe is best for their children. However, parents in different cultures have different ideas of what is best. Italian parents value social and emotional abilities and having an even temperament. Spanish parents want their children to be sociable. Swedish parents value security and happiness. Dutch parents value independence, long attention spans, and predictable schedules.

Differences in values cause parents to interpret different actions in different ways. Asking questions is seen by American parents as a sign that the child is smart. Italian parents, who value social and emotional competence, believe that asking questions is a sign that the child has good interpersonal skills.

How to Teach Your Child to Take Turns

Alyson Jiron, Brooke Brogle & Jill Giacomini

Taking turns can be hard, even for adults. It can be frustrating to wait for something that you really want. Think about the last time you waited in line for groceries or gas. How did you feel when you didn't know how long it would be until your turn or when someone who wasn't waiting got a turn before you? Young children often feel especially frustrated in these types of situations. Objects become "mine," and everyone wants to be "first," which can make playtime challenging for children and parents.

Why does this happen? Children are not born knowing how to take turns.

Taking turns is a skill that children must be taught and given many opportunities to practice. If a child is not taught how to take turns, she will continue to play with only her interests in mind and demand turns when she wants them.

A child who knows how to take turns has learned valuable skills about how to make friends, empathize, wait, talk, negotiate and be patient. Teaching your child how to take turns takes time, but can also be a rewarding experience that will benefit your child for a lifetime.



Try This at Home



- **Play games that require turn-taking.** Board or card games are a perfect way to teach older preschool children to wait for a turn. Outside games, such as basketball or catch, are also ideal games to practice taking turns. For young children, use very simple turn-taking games such as rolling a toy back and forth.
- **Build turn-taking into play time.** You can make just about any toy or activity into an opportunity to practice taking turns. Take turns doing activities such as stacking blocks, sliding down the slide, using the swing, racing a car down a track, scooping sand into a bucket, or wearing a crown.
- **Use a timer or a song to measure a turn.** Waiting is hard and children want to know when to expect their turn. Show children how to manage taking turns by using a sand timer or singing a song. These tools can help them to predict when their turn will end or begin and makes it less likely that they will become frustrated and use challenging behavior. You can say something like, "I see you want a turn on the swing too. Let's sing a song and when we are done it will be your turn."

Do you want to sing the Itsy-Bitsy Spider or Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star?"

- **Incorporate turn-taking into your everyday routine.** There are many ways to include turn-taking into the activities you already do on a daily basis such as choosing a TV show, cooking, or picking books to read. Simply pointing out to your child that you are taking turns helps to reinforce the skill. You can say, "You put in the chocolate chips and I put in the walnuts. We are taking turns! This is fun!"
- **Practice waiting.** Help prepare your child for turn-taking by giving him opportunities to practice waiting. For example, play "stop and go" games at the park, with toy cars, or in the pool. The more comfortable your child is with the concept of waiting and self-control, the more successful he will be with taking turns.
- **Celebrate successes.** Encourage your child with positive language when you see him waiting during a difficult situation or taking turns with a friend. You can say something like, "You are waiting for a turn on the swing. Waiting can be hard. You are doing it! High five!" or "I love the way

you and Ben took turns using your special car. I bet you feel really proud!"



Practice at Kindergarten

There are many opportunities to practice taking turns at school. Teachers often intentionally create opportunities for children to practice taking turns as well as learn from watching others take turns.

For example, a teacher may set out only one train to use on the track. Children must then practice taking turns and learn to work together to enjoy the same toy at the same time.



The Bottom Line

Children are not born knowing how to take turns. It is a skill that they must be taught. Taking turns can be hard. In order to learn how to take turns successfully, children need lots practice, help and encouragement from parents. When children learn how to take turns they also learn other valuable skills such as:

- * Being a good friend
- * Self-control
- * Problem-solving
- * Patience
- * Communication
- * Listening
- * Negotiation



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IS SUPERHERO PLAY GOOD FOR KIDS?

What is SUPERHERO play?

Superhero play is a form of creative or pretend play in which children imitate action heroes that they admire. In a child's social and moral development, 'good guy versus bad guy' play is normal and important.

There are basically two types of superhero play: one involves children playing with commercial figures or dolls of superheroes, and the other is dramatic play where children use props and dress up in clothes.

Figurine play can be limiting and the toys are predictable and often dull a child's own imagination. Therefore it's believed that dramatic play should be encouraged more.

In the dramatic form, children organize a drama and use their imagination and skills to create a play/game.

Preschool-aged children enjoy superhero play, with the most intense interest shown by four to five-year-olds. Preschoolers are not in control of their lives. The rules are set for them and adults make decisions for them. Superhero play, where they imitate heroes who overcome any obstacles they face, helps children to establish their own identity. They are beginning to understand the difference between good and evil, and they are keen to identify with the 'good' characters as they struggle to stop themselves from doing 'naughty' things. Sometimes parents and care-takers become concerned that superhero play, by its dramatic nature, can become too aggressive or disruptive. If properly supervised, however, superhero play can be a great stimulus of imagination and allow children to use up energy.



Benefits of superhero play

Key concepts:

- This form of dramatic play, centering on themes of good and bad, friends and enemies, and power and vulnerability, helps children to learn the difference between these concepts, understand rules and control their naughty impulses;

Empowerment:

- Preschoolers feel relatively powerless as they are expected to follow rules and listen to adults. They can 'try on' power from both sides: the frightening negative side of the 'bad guy' and the warm positive side of the 'good guy'. They gain control over fears by experiencing both sides of power play. Superhero play allows children to feel more in control and face their fears such as bedwetting, monsters, animals, going to childcare, or parents divorcing.
- Pretending to be a brave superhero can help children imagine what frightening experiences are like and be more comfortable trying new things. It gives them courage and strength. For example, children may insist on wearing a Superman costume to make them feel safe and in control.

Confidence:

- Young children can use superhero play to help make sense of confusing experiences and understand their place in the world. It helps children establish their own individuality.

Problem-Solving :

- Superhero play helps children develop problem-solving skills as they examine lots of possible solutions to a problem.
- Children learn about cooperation and team work as they sequence a story together, negotiate how play will proceed, and solve problems as a group.

Language:

- As with other forms of pretend play, superhero play helps children use and develop language skills. Their vocabulary is expanded as they interact with other children and supervising adults.

Social Behaviour:

- Superhero play assists children's socialization. Experts state that children who are involved in managed superhero play interact better with adults, and feel a sense of belonging in a group.
- By pretending to be someone else, children imagine how others feel and become aware of the needs of others and the reasons why people behave as they do. Superhero play gives children first-hand experience in empathy.

Creativity:

- Creativity is encouraged through superhero play. Children play at imaginary games for longer and develop more involved plots and scenarios.

Physical Development :

- Superhero play assists physical development as children jump, run and actively imitate the superhuman traits of their heroes. Physical confidence grows as children show off their physical feats.

Managing superhero play

To enable children to gain the most from superhero play, and to keep it controlled and avoid chaos, parents and care-takers can follow these guidelines:

Set reasonable limits and rules: Make it clear that aggressive behavior is not acceptable, and let your child know when and where superhero play is allowed. Outside is best and remind your child that safety comes first, so talk about what actions may be unsafe, such as jumping off the fence.

Be involved in the play: In this way you can intervene when things become aggressive or dangerous, or when children become scared or angry. You can become part of

the game, offer new options and experience play from the child's own viewpoint.

Encourage open communication: Talk about the game (after it has finished) and ask your child to share his or her feelings. Also, explain why you don't like it when he or she pretends to hurt or kill someone and help him or her to find alternatives to problem solving and conflict resolution.

Limit watching aggressive TV shows: Monitor the television children watch. Watch these shows with children and talk about what is happening and how the shows are made. By limiting passive television watching, children also have more time for creative and interactive play in a supportive environment.

Provide other environments: for your child to express herself. Use clay to pound out anger, or dance to burn excess energy. These are other ways that children can be powerful and control the game. Help children to be active and develop new plots that allow for action without fighting. Creating costumes, props and settings can be a very important part of the play.

Talk about real heroes: Use newspaper stories, television news and other media to discuss that real heroes are brave, helpful and caring. Help children to become heroes themselves - raise money with a for a charity; arrange toy collections for an orphanage etc..

Give children choices and power in their lives: Let children feel responsibility and autonomy in making decisions, such as choosing what colour shirt to wear or which playground to visit.

Stress peaceful problem-solving: Talk about conflict resolution skills and practice these skills with children. Discuss how these skills can be applied to situations depicted in superhero shows.

Don't give in and buy every new superhero toy: Show children how to play with characters they already have in different ways, such as involving the 'good guys' and the 'bad guys' in a rescue mission together), and choose toys that allow children to use them in a number of ways, such as Lego or Mobilo.

Develop a child's sense of self-worth and affirm his or her own power. Praise children when they accomplish real achievements, such as completing a puzzle or learning how to tie shoe laces. Also recognize their strength and physical abilities in the same way.

Talk about what it means to be a friend: Highlight the importance of accepting differences in others and help children to rotate roles in superhero play so that everyone has a turn at being the 'good guy' and the 'bad guy'.



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WHY CHILDREN NEED TO PLAY Julia Gabriel (Centre for Learning) - juliagabriel.com

How do children learn? How do they grasp entire language systems, codes of communication, symbolic thinking, and mastery of the skills they need to read and write? The answer is so simple that it's sometimes too difficult to grasp.

They learn through play!

How can that be? Well, babies learn through play. Do you remember those first games that they played intuitively with us, the first pretend games of peek-a-boo? The elaborate, imaginative play of 3 and 4 year olds develops from this. The give and take of conversation develops out of baby's first playful smiles and our response to them. The manipulation and solving of puzzles grows out of a baby's first reaching and grasping of objects we use in play with him. If we play with our babies in a loving, nurturing, joyful way, they learn to grow up trusting in people, forming solid relationships with those around them. Knowledge of the world develops out of a baby's early -play.

When the two-year old begins make-believe play, it contributes to the goals of early education. Let's examine these.



Representational Thought

Through imaginary play the child practices many different ways of representing reality, by creating symbols. He'll make homes, farms, animals, people, food, or an outing to the "zoo" with paint, blocks, play-dough and sand, or by dressing up. His creations are symbols of representational thought. Symbols are things that represent something else - an object, idea or event. What's important is that all later education is based on the assumption that a child has symbolic competence. Literacy and numeracy are about understanding symbols. So, it's crucial to pay attention to this symbolic mastery in the pre-school years. Symbolic mastery is gained and practiced through involvement in a wide variety of play activities.

Conceptual Thought

Children at play are young scientists and mathematicians. They're exploring the boundaries of their worlds, asking what happens if I mix mud with water, red with blue, blue with yellow? When a child plays with sand and a bucket, or water and jugs, he is laying the foundations of mathematical understanding. It's only through experience that he will come to understand concepts like greater than, smaller than, density, gravity, weight, size and conservation of liquids. It is only through play that he will gain this concrete experience and knowledge.

Language and Communication Skills

During play, children's language is more complex than in most other activities. They're practicing using the adult language they've heard, by using it in role-play. A child "playing" at being the teacher, mother or father, will recreate the language patterns she's overheard, using correct grammar and a wide range of advanced communication

skills. I remember my surprise on first hearing my own words, expression and mannerisms coming out of my two-year old daughter Emma!

Early childhood literacy foundations are primarily about talking and playing with words and language. These natural forms of learning and development come before reading and writing or exposure to print.

Physical Development

Children at play are exercising their bodies and mastering physical coordination in the most natural way. Rhyme games for clapping, jumping, crawling, miming daily activities and "freezing" the movement are excellent ways to help your child develop mastery of gross and fine motor skills. He'll need these for later literacy. A child who can't sit at a table and cut, can't learn to write, so it's not only fun, but also beneficial, to enjoy cutting and making a collage together at home.

Social and Emotional Development

Through play, children learn to work cooperatively, solve problems collaboratively and how to win friends. Social rules are absorbed naturally by observation and practiced through play. Play can help young children deal with things they can't put into words: Distress at Daddy going away, fear of monsters or the dark or going to school. Tension, fear and anxiety can be acted out in play, and it can be re-played again and again while the child gradually comes to grasp, understand and master his emotions.

Yet, pressures from society and expectations of formal education encourage us to view with suspicion an early childhood education based on play. It's easier for the non-professional to see the value of the formal approach to

learning rather than one with play at its centre. But, structured activities that are heavily adult directed, such as work sheets and drills, are de-motivating and not the most

"Play is our brain's favourite way of learning."

effective way for pre-school children to learn and develop. They won't give children the skills they need to be able to adapt to the pace of change and demands of the future.

Today's children are preparing to enter a competitive, turbulent world of rapid change. What are the skills they need?

- Versatility and flexibility
- Imagination and creativity
- Self - motivation, so they're able to make their own choice and act on them
- Social skills, which enable understanding of self and collaboration with others
- Courage and confidence, so they're able to learn from their mistakes and try again

We believe that helping children to develop these qualities is the education, and that play is the perfect context for mastering these life skills.

What's the best environment to nurture them in? At home, within the family. We encourage all families to play hard at their homework, and enjoy it together!

What's the best homework?

- Reading bed-time stories, talking about them and extending them into make-believe games
- Imaginative play. Make a dressing up box to keep at home that stimulates role-play and drama
- Playing games together as a family, sharing activities and hobbies. Our children learn important social rules, like turn-taking and fairness, from games. They come to accept losing (someone has to) and learn to value failure as an opportunity to evaluate and try again
- Outings to special places. Planning together and preparation as a family are all part of the learning journey
- Family conversation. Let's show our children that we value them by listening to them, letting them practice talking and sharing their ideas.

What is play?

Play, for children, is serious work; an opportunity for learning all the skills they'll need for life.

- Play is created and directed by the players
- Play is free of external rules
- Play is enacted as though the activity were real
- Play is meaningful to the players

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Healthy from the Start!!

How feeding nurtures your young child's body, heart and mind

Feeding is one of a parent's most important jobs. It is how we help our children grow healthy and strong. But mealtimes are about much more than food. Meal and snack times give you a chance to help your baby or toddler:

- Learn healthy eating habits
- Feel important and loved
- Feel understood and respected
- Trust that others will care for her
- Feel good about her body

Here are some ways to help your child become a healthy eater:

- **Remember: Meals are about more than food.**
They are a time to connect with your child and to support her overall development. Talk with your child during meals and don't let her eat alone. Allocate enough time for the meal so that both you and your child can eat without stress. This helps build strong family relationships.
- **Create routines around mealtime.**
Routines make children feel loved and secure. Establish regular meal and snack times beginning when your child is 9-12 months old. Make sure your child sits well. To have a good chair is important. Walking around feeding the child sets up bad habits. Young children tend to love routines, having their own place to sit is good and this will make your child look forward to each meal.
- **Offer 3 to 4 healthy food choices (that your child likes) at each meal.**
Research shows that children will choose a healthy diet when they are offered a selection of different healthy foods.
- **Don't force your baby or toddler to eat.**
Talk about nice things, not about problems, especially the childrens' problems.
Talking about awkward things doesn't help the appetite. Forcing to eat often results in children refusing the food and eating less.

- **Don't give up on new foods!**

Patience is the key. You may have to repeatedly encourage your child to try new foods before she will eat it. If your child is not given the opportunity to try different tastes during his first two years of living, the risk is higher that she will be not try different foods later on. Children generally learn to like food that they eat often.

The first reaction a child of any age usually has is "I don't like this". Babies frown and spit. And then sometimes they gape for more. Older children might even refuse to taste anything new, thinking that it will taste awful.

Try to make new foods interesting and be content even if your child only tastes a tiny little piece on their finger the first time.

- **Take away Toys - Turn off the TV (computers, etc) at mealtime.**

The television will distract children from eating. Meals are for eating and communicating; it's not play time. It also takes time away from talking as a family.

- **Healthy eating and exercise go hand in hand.**

So make active play a part of everyday family life.

- **If you are concerned about your child's weight or activity level, talk to your child's health care provider.**

To learn more about feeding and young children, visit http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/health-nutrition/health_eng.pdf





It's the process Not the product

Why is art process important?

Young children do art for the experience, the exploration, and the experimentation. In the "process" of doing art, they discover creativity, mystery, joy, and frustration, which are all important pieces in the puzzle of learning. Whatever the resulting masterpiece-be it a bright sticky glob or a gallery-worthy piece- it is only a result to the young child, not the reason for doing the art in the first place.

Art process allows children to explore, discover, and manipulate their worlds.

Sometimes the process is sensory, such as feeling slippery cool paint on bare fingers. Other times it is the mystery of colors blending unexpectedly, or the surprise of seeing a realistic picture evolve from a random blob of paint. Art process can be a way to "get the wiggles out," or to smash a ball of clay instead of another child.

How can adults encourage the process of art?

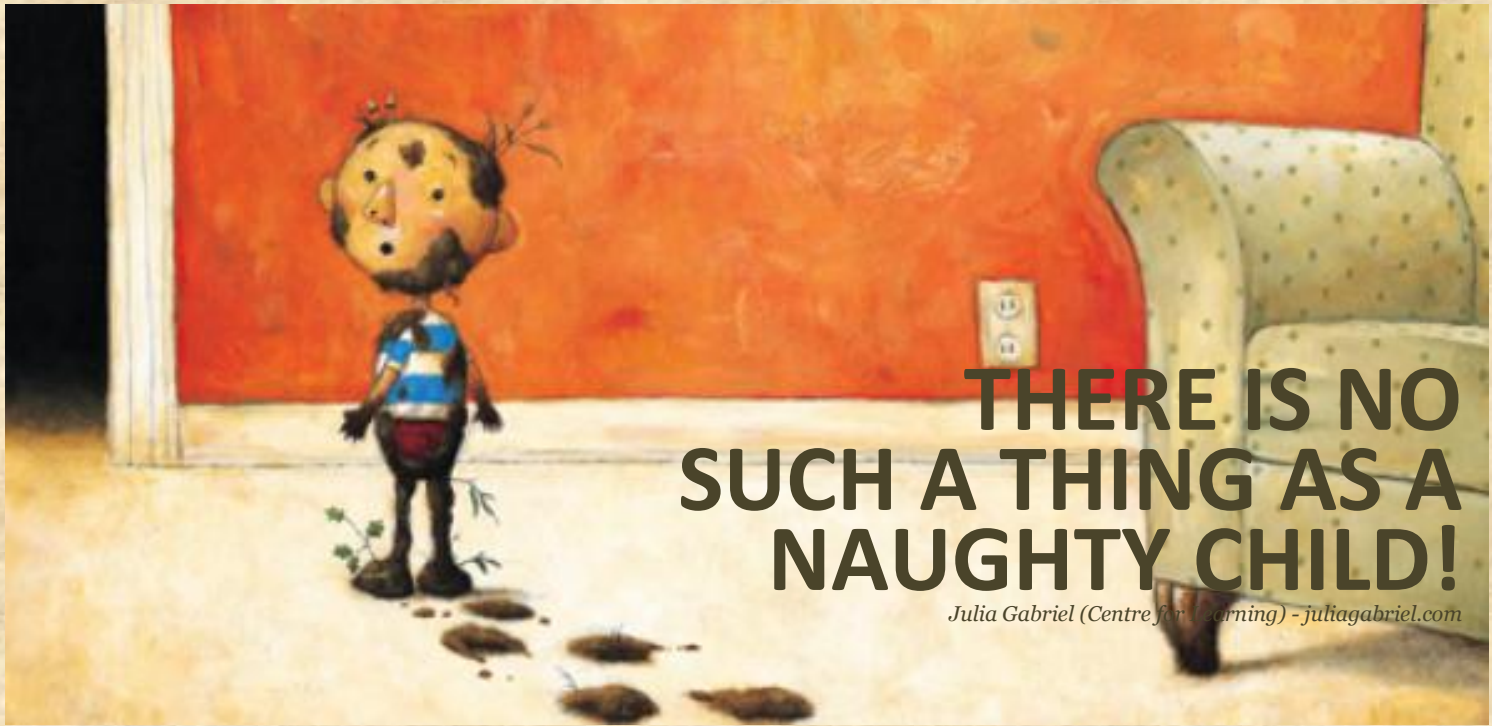
Provide interesting materials. Stand back and watch. Offer help with unruly materials, but keep hands off children's work as much as possible. It's a good idea not to make samples for children to copy because this limits their possibilities.

Sometimes adults unknowingly communicate to a child that the product is the most important aspect of the child's art experience. The following comments and questions serve as examples of things to say that will help encourage each child to evaluate his or her own artwork:

- Tell me about your artwork.
- I see you've used many colors!
- Did you enjoy making this?
- How did the paint feel!
- The yellow is so great next to the purple!
- I see you made your own brown color. How did you do it?

Process art is a wonder to behold. Watch the children discover their unique capabilities and the joy of creating. This is where they begin to feel good about art and to believe that mistakes can be a stepping stone instead of a roadblock in art as well as in other aspects of their lives. A concept children enjoy hearing is; "There's no right way, there's no wrong way, there's just your way."





THERE IS NO SUCH A THING AS A NAUGHTY CHILD!

Julia Gabriel (Centre for Learning) - juliagabriel.com

"My child doesn't want to go to school."
 "He's so playful, never wants to listen."
 "My son doesn't want to sit still. He only wants to run and play."

These parental woes often end with the common lament: "He's very naughty!"

Yes, it may seem that way; a mischievous child who doesn't want to learn or listen. Our response to statements like these is always, why is he like this? Why does he appear to be naughty? Why does he need to misbehave?

No child wants to incur his parents' anger or become the terror of the class. Children, in fact, want to be just like those they admire and love; their parents, teachers, brothers, sisters and classmates. So what is really happening when a child is naughty? What is making him misbehave?

Experience has taught us that misbehaviour is caused by one of three things. Either the child is unable to cope in a situation, or he's thinks that he's unable perform to expectations, or his misbehaviour is a learned behaviour.

Children Want to Be Like Those they Love!!

Children learn by copying those around them. They acquire their language and behavior patterns from those they love because they want to be just like them. From the time they are born children are soaking up the sounds and rhythms of language, watching body language and assimilating whole codes of conduct and communication. A two year-old knows well how to behave and what is expected of him.

At home he'll have his own belongings: Toys, clothes, bed, personal space and respect from the family in which he's an important member.

The problems start, for some, when they go out into the world and are expected to conform to the behaviour

expected in a class or societal group; to share toys, take turns, be kind and sensitive to others. Unless these values have been part of his routine at home he'll hit his first brick-wall at around age two to three years old, and it can be a painful experience. Mum and Dad may say:

"He doesn't want to go to school.

He cries all the way there.

He's very naughty."

Not so! He just needs understanding while he's learning that at school things are different. Mum and Dad will come back later to take him home, but while he's there, if he shares the toys and the teacher's attention, he'll have a lot of fun and enjoy learning by playing, singing, dancing, listening to stories and making things.

Of course Mum and Dad can help the socialization process by preparing him to go to school, so it's easy for him to conform. He'll need to play with other children at home, or at their homes, before he goes to school, so he isn't intimidated by sharing with others. He'll need to learn how to dress himself and tidy up, important skills of independence. The family can nurture his communication skills by helping him take turns in conversation rather than focusing all attention on him.

It's important to support him in this challenging first transition to school or to child care by preparing him and helping him through the tough times. If he appears to be misbehaving, ask yourself why, and be patient with his efforts. Remember that he wants to be just like the others, but it isn't easy at first. He's trying his best and will get there in time.

Children Learn in Different Ways

Some of us run faster than others. Some swim better, are more musical, less shy. We're born with a genetic predisposition to learning certain skills easily. Equally, some of us find it hard to sit still to learn in a busy classroom full of noise and distractions. The child who fits this category isn't being naughty when he runs around or appears not to focus during story time. This child needs understanding while he

struggles to focus, to master physical energy and to control his attention.

Misbehaviour is a Cry for Help

Sometimes we have children who misbehave because they think they can't meet expectations. A child like this will do anything to avoid attention being focused on his work, because he expects to fail. So he'll clown around and distract attention from the task at hand.

The child with learning difficulties is a classic example of this. He's so used to being the butt of other children's jokes, because he can't perform well in class, that he'll be the first to laugh at others or become the constant clown in class.

This child needs patient understanding and loving support while he finds the right learning style to enable him to achieve his potential. Meanwhile he's frustrated so he misbehaves. It's challenging and most rewarding to watch these children blossom when we find a style that suits them, because many children need their own individual learning path to confidence and success.

.....or a Learned Behaviour

Some children are labelled "naughty" because they hit others, or behave in a rough aggressive manner with their classmates. Often these children are only copying behaviour they've learned from others. The child who is hit, or beaten, will hit others when he plays. The child who hears rude or insensitive language directed towards others mimics it in his daily life, because he has learned it from those he loves and thinks this is the right way to behave. We must question ourselves first to check that we're modelling the behaviour we'd like to see in our children.

Seeking Help

Once you come to see the "naughty" child as needing support and understanding you're on the path to supporting his needs. Seek help by speaking to your child's teacher who will see him in a wider social context and who will work with you to decide on a consistent approach at home and at school.

Alternatively ask your child's school to help you seek out a Learning Support counselor who can help you discover what's causing the misbehaviour. There is plenty of help available once we stop labelling children as "naughty" and realise that deviant behaviour is always a cry for help.



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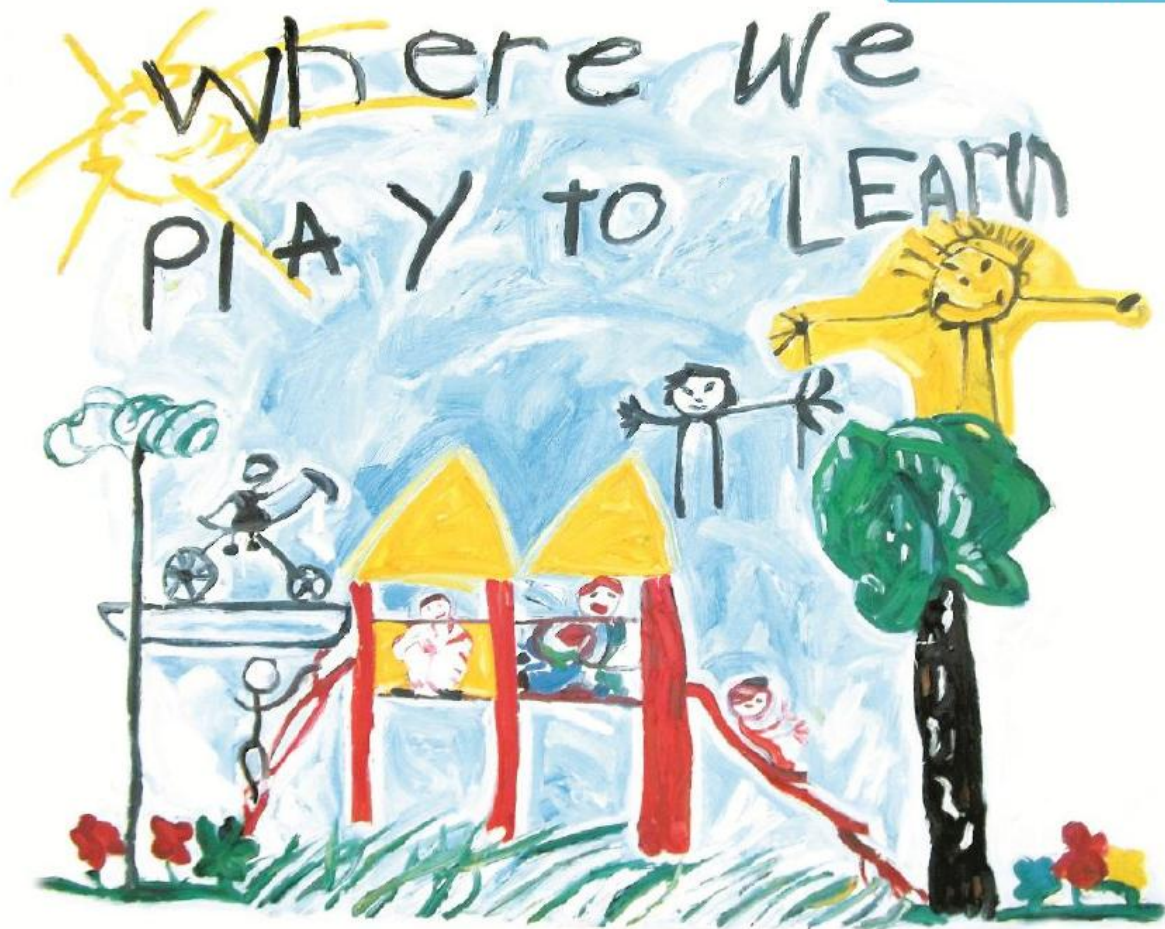


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SmartKids International Child Care Centres offer childcare for young children in English

Parent-Child groups for children from 12 months to 3 years old;
Parents will stay and play with their children for 1.5 hours, depending on their request 1-2 or 3 times a week. This is an opportunity for children and parents to get introduced to the centre, socialize with other children, learn songs and get feedback from each other about typical child issues.

Kiddies - Early Childhood groups (max. 18 children) for children from 18 months to 3 years old;
offer a half or full day program, without parents, but with integrated special activities.

Big Kids - Kindergarten groups (max. 20 children) for children from 3 to 6 years old;
offer a half or full day program based on the pedagogic principles for this age group.

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