

Some of the Urges that spontaneously Express through Babies' and Children's Play

Some of our human play urges are shared with other mammals because the structure of mammals' brains requires mammalian play to develop the neurological structures needed for survival. The less stable neocortical structure of humans (sometimes referred to as 'the great thinking brain') depends on two things to 'stabilise' in an individual - nurture and play. The genetically programmed play urges (schema) are Nature's way of seeing the neurological structures are developed for survival *and* transcendence.

The question for those of us who work with children is what do we have in their environment that will enable them to follow their genetically encoded promptings and play out their play urges? And is there enough of each thing? Two pinecones will not cut it, half a barrel of pinecones will. One wheelbarrow or trolley is a recipe for conflict, half a dozen means there will be 'Transport Companies' evolve at your place.

Gathering - What beautiful things are there at your place for the children to gather up? Are there lots and lots?

Transporting - What will they transport them in? Handbags, baskets, buckets, wheelbarrows?

Deconstruction - Breaking things comes before making things - for most children.

Construction - Is there enough to make something *decent*? *Two* sets of multiple unit blocks? Planks, pegs, reels, blankets, tarpaulins...

Huts (enclosure) - Shelter and safety is deep within the human experience, so what is there for the children to construct their own huts with (rather than be stuck with fixed 'play house' someone else has constructed)? Cardboard cartons are perfect for children from babies upward.

Throwing (trajectory) - What is there to throw, inside and outside. And what else is there to throw?

Enveloping - Wrapping things in more leaves and more paper with forty meters of sellotape...

Connection - Putting things end to end, tying things together to make a 'convoy' of wheelbarrows, trucks, friends... They'll need string, rope, ties to connect up their creations.

Posting - Putting things into things is an urge. You can buy specific expensive equipment for this urge or you can up-cycle and put things in the environment that just ask you to post.

Patterning and ordering - If you have plenty of beautiful containers full of beautiful natural objects to meet the gathering urge, you will also have the most ideal materials for patterning and ordering. All your sorting, classifying, seriating threads of learning will happen with these treasures from nature.

Families - Children make families, but that doesn't mean you have to have plastic animals or a class set of dolls. They make families with sticks, stones, shells...

Rotation - Starting with rolling when babies learn to move off their backs to spinning round and round and falling down dizzy, children have a pattern of the circular to unfold. Low, horizontal tyre-swings extend this, wheeled vehicles, a spinning wheel, retro wind-up gramophones...

Orientation - Looking at things from another angle. Where can children hang upside down, look through their legs, 'stand' on their head?

Transformation - Turning something into something else, watching the properties morph and change: soil and water mud pies, clay and water sculpting, flour, butter, baking powder, sugar, water and yeast morning tea rolls....

Climbing - Children are going to climb - some more than others - so where are they going to climb that offers them a decent challenge, both inside and outside?

Jumping - Children are going to jump, so where are they going to jump that is legal inside, and a challenge outside?

Digging and burying - We share this urge with a number of mammals. Have the children got proper spades and tools?

Tug of war - Like some other mammals, tug-of-war is an urge. What have you got for this urge?

Tumbling and wrestling - We share this urge with puppies, kittens and all our primate cousins.

Running and chasey - We share this urge with many of our fellow mammals, taking turns to chase and be chased.

Playing with water - This sacred element is irresistible for all children and most adults.

Playing with fire - This sacred element is irresistible for children and adults alike, where will they light fires legally?