

Play is my Work

How Adults Can Support Children

By Susan Whitney

What is play?

1. Play is the work of my childhood. It is my response to life. It's how I make the pieces of the puzzle fit. It is always an unfolding process.
2. Play is the way I discover who I am and how I relate to others. I need to try on lots of 'hats' to see how they feel.
3. Play is my life. If I cannot play, you should be as concerned as if I could not eat or sleep.
4. Play is my language; it's my way of telling you how I feel. Please take time to listen to my words and learn this language.
5. Play is my outlet for all yucky feelings I have inside; the fear, the anger, the anxiety, the frustration and the guilt. If I know these don't scare you, they won't scare me. If I can play them out, then I don't have to carry them inside my body.

When I play I need you as an adult to:

1. Honor my work by not interrupting or leading my play.
2. Validate my experience and perception of the world and who I am in it by reflecting what you see as accurately as possible.
3. Trust me by never attempting to hurry my play or my healing.
4. Keep me emotionally and physically safe by setting firm and clear limits within a framework of freedom, not control.
5. Build my self-confidence by keeping yourself firmly grounded in the belief that I have within myself the ability to solve my own problems and find my path to healing.
6. Respect my work by giving me the responsibility to make choices and institute change in my play and in my life.
7. Have your own playful child close at hand. I like to know you can have fun too!