

## *Refrigerator Notes and Handouts*

### *Child-Directed Play*



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# *Strengthening Children's Social Skills, Emotional Regulation, And School Readiness Skills Through Child-Directed Play*

## HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK



### *To Do:*

- **PLAY** with your child being child-directed and an “appreciative audience” for 10 to 15 minutes every day.
- **KEEP TRACK** of these play periods on the Record Sheet: Play Times handout.



### *To Read:*

- Handouts and Chapter One *Child-directed Play* from **The Incredible Years** book.

### **OPTIONAL ACTIVITY:**

- **FILL IN** the two checklists for evaluating play, and bring them to the next meeting.

*Handout 1A*

### **General Guidelines For Play Sessions with Your Child**

1. Don't play a competitive game, especially with a younger child.
2. It is better to play with unstructured toys such as blocks, trucks, dolls, etc.
3. Some adults find it helpful to play at the same time every day. Another useful strategy is to take the phone off the hook so children know that the time you are spending together is important.
4. If there is more than one child in the family, try to play with each child separately if possible. It takes time to develop the skills necessary to go back and forth between two or more children effectively, so it is better not to attempt this until you have had some practice playing with each child individually.

# Play With Your Child

## HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK



### *To Do:*

1. **PLAY** for 10 minutes each day with your child doing an activity such as:
  - coloring or painting together
  - playing with some unstructured toys (e.g., Legos, pots and pans, blocks, dress up)
  - playing with play dough
2. **KEEP TRACK** of play periods on the “Record Sheet: Play Times” handout.

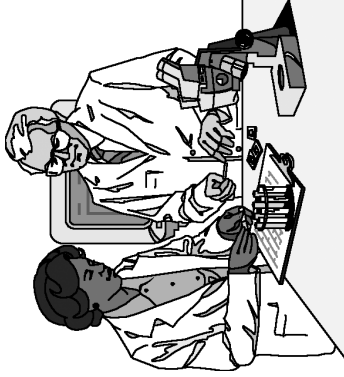


### *To Read:*

3. **READ** Chapter 1, *Child-directed Play*, in **The Incredible Years book**.

Handout 1B

# Parents Thinking Like Scientists



**Child Problems**



**Child Strengths**

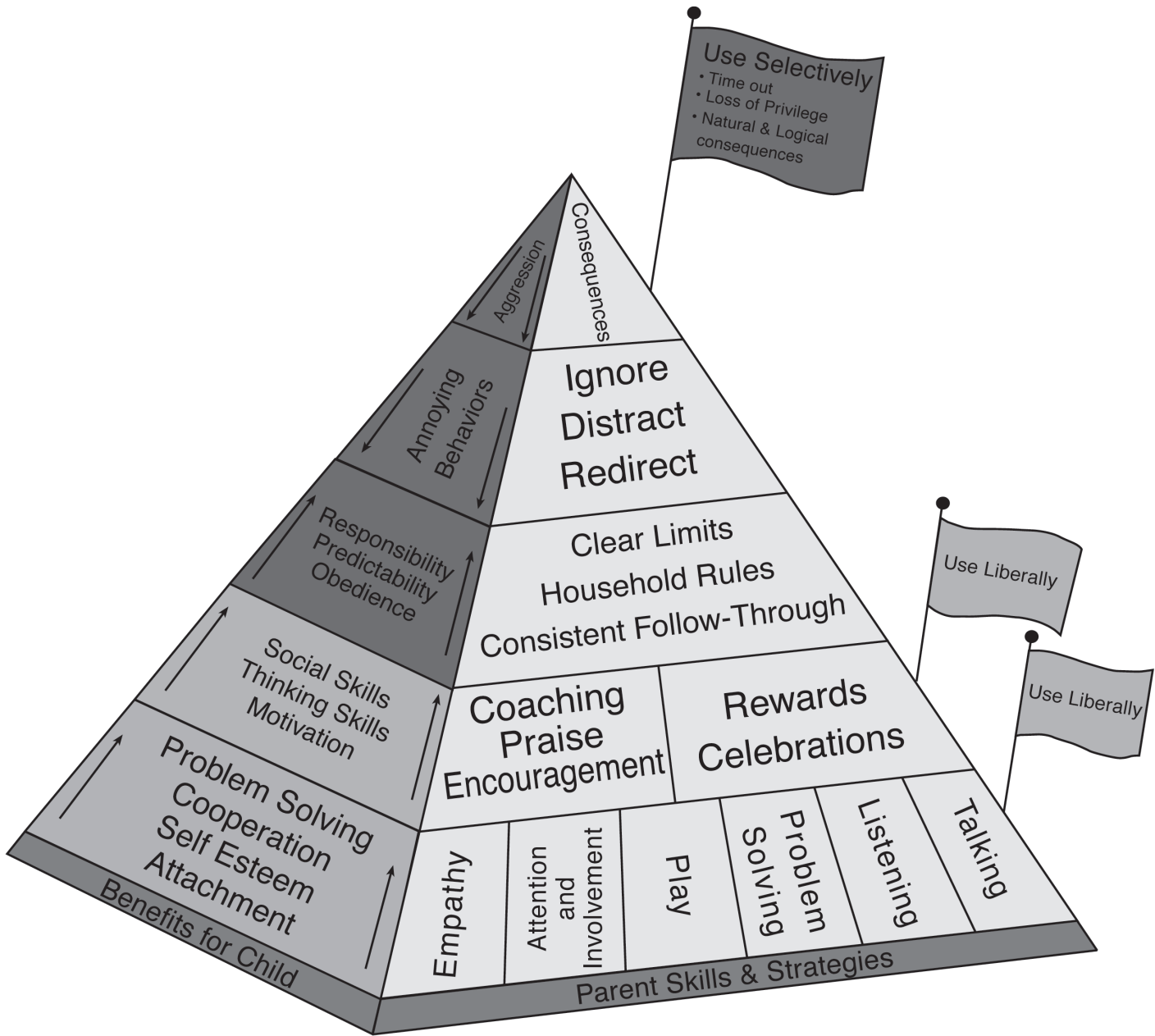


**Goals**

## REFRIGERATOR NOTES CHILD-DIRECTED PLAY

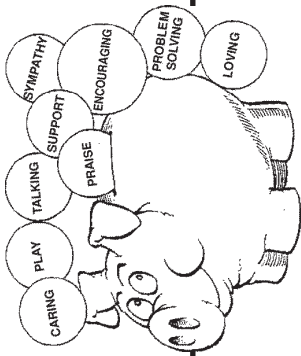
- Follow your child's lead and interests.
- Pace at your child's level —give your child time.
- Encourage your child's curiosity to explore new activities
- Avoid competing with your child.
- Don't focus on the "correct" way or specified rules for a game or an activity
- Be an attentive and appreciative audience.
- Model cooperation by doing what your child asks you to do.
- Praise and encourage your child's self-discovery and creativity; don't criticize.
- Engage in pretend play with your child (e.g., puppets, playing house, toy tele-phones).
- Use descriptive comments instead of asking questions.
- Curb your desire to give too much help; encourage your child's problem solving.
- Laugh, have fun and share your feelings of joy.
- Remember the attention principle, and focus on giving your attention to your child's positive rather than negative play behaviors.





# Parenting Pyramid®





Remember to Build Up Your Bank Account

Home Activities



## RECORD SHEET: PLAY TIMES

Record times you spent playing with your child, what you did, and any reaction you noticed in yourself or your child.

Date	Time Spent	Activity	Child's Response	Parent's Reaction



# Brainstorm

## Personal Thoughts About Play



Before continuing, think about these two questions:

1. What are the potential benefits for your child when you play with him/her?
2. What gets in the way of playing with your child?

Write down the benefits of playing with your child and your difficulties in doing it.

<b>Benefits of My Playing and Spending Time With My Child</b>	
<p><b>Goal:</b> I will commit to playing with my child _____ times this week for _____ minutes.</p>	



## Supplemental Home Activity



Completing this self-evaluation may be helpful for you to think about you and your child's play interactions.

### CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING YOUR CHILD'S PLAY

**When you observe your child's play, how often does he or she:**

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost Never
1. Solve problems?	_____	_____	_____
2. Show creativity?	_____	_____	_____
3. Cooperate rather than compete?	_____	_____	_____
4. Take risks and try out new ideas?	_____	_____	_____
5. Feel comfortable making mistakes?	_____	_____	_____
6. Show initiative rather than acting passive	_____	_____	_____
7. Display independence rather than dependence?	_____	_____	_____
8. Motivate him- or herself rather than show boredom?	_____	_____	_____
9. Show self-confidence rather than fear	_____	_____	_____

*After you have completed this checklist, think about what you have observed. Most of these behaviors are associated with school success. Complete the next checklist in order to discover what you can do to encourage these behaviors.*

## ***Checklist For Evaluating Parent/Child Play Interactions***



**A. When you play with your child, how often do you encourage the child to:**

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost Never
1. Attempt to solve problems?	_____	_____	_____
2. Play independently?	_____	_____	_____
3. Be creative and inventive?	_____	_____	_____
4. Express feelings and ideas?	_____	_____	_____
5. Engage in pretend or make-believe play?	_____	_____	_____

**B. When you play with your child, how often do you:**

1. Direct or structure the activity?	_____	_____	_____
2. Create the rules of the game?	_____	_____	_____
3. Criticize and correct your child's mistake?	_____	_____	_____
4. Force your child to finish the project?	_____	_____	_____
5. Allow participation only in sex-appropriate activities	_____	_____	_____
6. Feel uncomfortable with your child's expression of fear or helplessness?	_____	_____	_____
7. Compete with your child	_____	_____	_____

## *Checklist For Evaluating Adult/Child Play Interactions, Page 2*

**B. When you play with your child, how often do you:**

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost Never
8. Become engrossed with your own play, and ignore your child's play?	_____	_____	_____
9. Ask a lot of questions?	_____	_____	_____
10. Impose your own ideas?	_____	_____	_____
11. Give too much help?	_____	_____	_____
12. Prohibit pretend play?	_____	_____	_____
13. Demand perfection?	_____	_____	_____
14. Place emphasis on the ultimate product of play rather than effort?	_____	_____	_____

**C. What interferes with your ability to play with your child?  
How often do you play with your child alone?  
Do you feel this play time is valuable?**

Evaluating your responses to the items on this checklist will highlight some of the ways you can improve your play interactions with your child. For example, if you checked "Almost Never" on some of the items in Part A, you should make a deliberate effort to encourage these behaviors in the future. If you checked "Almost Always" or "Sometimes" on some of the items in Part B, you should try to eliminate these behaviors. Your responses may indicate that you need to schedule more play time with your child, or that you need to change some of the circumstances or attitudes that are interfering with your ability to participate in play activities.

## ***Parents and Children “Having Fun”***

### **What is the value of play? Why is play important for children?**

1. The most obvious benefit from play is that it aids physical development. When children run, jump, skip, yell, and laugh, it contributes to their good health and the development of gross motor skills as well as perceptual motor skills.
2. Play is a learning situation for children and parents. Play is an opportunity for children to learn who they are, what they can do, and how to relate to the world around them. Through play, children are able to discover and explore, use their imagination, solve problems, and test out new ideas. Through these experiences children gradually learn how to gain control over their environment, and they become more competent and self-confident. How often have you heard a child proudly say, “See what I did?” Play allows children to push the limits in a positive way, to extend what they’ve learned as far as they can. It gives children the freedom to fail and make mistakes, and the opportunity to explore the limits of their skills.
3. Play is a means of emotional expression. Children live in a world where they have little power and few legitimate opportunities to express emotions such as anger or dependency. Fantasy play can reduce feelings of fear, anger, and inadequacy, and provides experiences which enhance children’s feelings of enjoyment, control, and success.
4. Through play, children can communicate thoughts, needs, satisfactions, problems, and feelings. An adult can learn a lot about a child’s feelings of joy, hope, anger and fear by watching, listening to, and talking with a child at play.
5. Play is a place for children to try out roles such as mother, father, aunt, teacher, and doctor. Role playing gives children a chance to see the world from other points of view, and helps them become less egocentric.
6. When children play in a supportive environment, they can be creative. They are free to try out their imagination, explore the impossible and the absurd, and develop confidence in the value of their thoughts and ideas. During make-believe play, boxes, blocks, and articles of furniture can become houses, palaces, or entire kingdoms; doll figures can turn into mothers, children, and even monsters.
7. Play develops the basic skills for social interaction. Children learn how to cooperate, share, and be sensitive to the feelings of others during play.

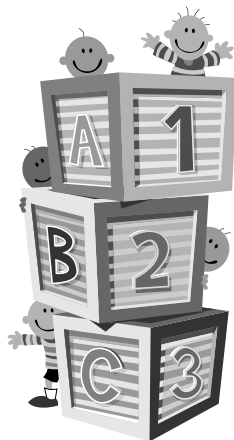
For the child, play is not frivolous—it is an opportunity for growth and development in almost every area. But it takes practice for children to become competent, creative, and self-confident in their play. It is important for adults to actually participate in play activities with children, and to create a supportive environment so that children will engage in a variety of play experiences.

## *Properties of Play Toys*

Toys are an important part of fostering good play in children. However, it is not always necessary to buy expensive, commercially approved, or “educational” toys. Children are marvelously inventive and, if their imaginations are not squelched by an overly restrictive atmosphere, they can turn almost any object such as a saucepan and spoon into an interesting plaything.

Basically, good play material and equipment should be:

1. Safe, without sharp edges or lead-based paint.
2. Unstructured and as free of detail as possible. Toys such as blocks, play dough, and paints elicit more imaginary play from children.
3. Responsive and versatile. Toys should stimulate children to do things for themselves. Equipment that makes the child a spectator, such as a mechanical duck which waddles and quacks after being wound up, may entertain for a moment but has no play value. The more things a toy does, the less the child does. If a toy renders the child passive, it is undesirable.
4. Large and easily manipulated. Toys that are too small can be a great source of frustration for young children, because the child’s muscular coordination is not yet developed enough to handle the smaller forms and shapes.
5. Pleasurable to touch, durable and simple in construction. For example, maple hardwood is warm and pleasant to touch, as well as durable.
6. Something that encourages cooperative play. Housekeeping equipment, such as a broom and a dustpan, encourages interactions with other children as well as sharing and cooperation.
7. Within the child’s level of skill, and should fit in with the child’s personality and present interests. However, also take into consideration your own likes and dislikes so that you will enjoy sharing the toys with your child (a loud toy drum may be great fun for a child, but annoying to adults).





### ***My child's distractibility:***

This is the degree to which s/he is distracted by sounds, sights, or things in the environment versus how much s/he can shut out external stimuli and pay attention.

**Very Distractible**

1

2

3

4

**Not Distractible**

5

### ***My child's mood:***

This is the degree to which s/he is happy or positive versus negative.

**Positive Mood**

1

2

3

4

**Negative Mood**

5

### ***My child's persistence:***

This is the degree to which s/he can persist or sustain his or her attention versus how easily s/he gives up in the face of obstacles.

**Long Attention Span**

1

2

3

4

**Short Attention Span**

5

### ***Easy and Flexible Temperament Child***

If your child is mostly regular, adaptable, positive, calm and has a moderate activity level you have an easy temperament child; about 40% of children fall into this category.

### ***Slow to Warm Up and Cautious Child***

If your child is slow to adapt, initially withdraws and has moderate activity and intensity, your child will have a slow to warm up temperament; about 15% of children fall into this category.

### ***Challenging Temperament Child***

If your child has a high activity level, is unpredictable, poor adaptability, and is intense and negative you have a more challenging temperament child; about 10% of children fall into this category.

About 35% of children are a combination of these patterns.





## ***Parenting Approaches: A Temperament Focus***

Since parents can't change their child's temperamental style, parenting approaches must be accepting and responsive to the unique temperament or cues of each child. It is important for parents to try to get a reasonable "fit" between their child's temperament and their parenting style. This can be done by parents observing and learning about their children's behavioral style and then altering or adapting their parenting expectations, encouragement and discipline to suit their child's unique needs.

Remember, it is important not to label your child as easy, shy or difficult. These labels can damage your child's self-esteem and perhaps set up a self-fulfilling prophecy that prevents your child from expanding his or her behavioral repertoire. On the other hand, knowing what kind of temperament your child has may make the difference between a happy or a troubled child and between an accepting or a frustrated parent. Understanding your child's temperament can improve your relationship with your child because you will learn how to bring out the best in your child. It is within your power as a parent to help your child cope with his temperament, to build his self-esteem and eventually come to understand himself better.

For example, parenting the easy or flexible temperament child will demand less parental time or attention, because the child will adapt easily to changes in routines, and may not express his or her individual wants. Because of this easy style, parents will need to make special efforts to find out about their child's frustrations, hurts and interests and assess what he or she is thinking and feeling. Otherwise, such a child may become invisible in the family, insecure and not be helped to develop her uniqueness.

On the other hand, the inflexible, hyperactive, inattentive, unpredictable, or easily frustrated child may seem to have an insatiable need for attention. Children with these challenging temperaments often leave their parents exhausted because of the amount of monitoring and attention that they require. These children will need predictable household routines, help in preparing for transitions, and outlets for their high level of energy. Parents can work to recognize cues and triggers for their child's intense emotions and be proactive by using humor to diffuse intensity, prompting a self-calming activity, or changing to a soothing activity such as a story or warm bath. Parents of intense children will strive to be tolerant, patient, and model appropriate responses. If the child is negative, they will need try to encourage positive responses. If the child is very distractible, parents should try to keep instructions clear and tasks simple. It is important to remove competing distractions when possible, provide frequent breaks, and redirect the child without shame or anger.

These children will need frequent praise and encouragement for completing small steps of a task. Likewise, parents of such children will need extra support for themselves so they can get rest or relief to refuel their energy.

On the other hand, the cautious slow to warm up child, will be relatively inactive and may withdraw or react negatively to new situations. These children will also need clear routines as well as encouragement to try new activities and ample warm up time to meet new people or enter new situations such as day care or preschool. These children will need discussions from parents to prepare them for change in routines and warnings a few minutes before transitions to new activities. They will need time to close one activity before going to the next. It is also helpful to keep the number of transitions to a minimum. They may need additional time to finish tasks. Avoid criticism for their slow pace or resistance.





## ***Parent's Temperament Fit with their Child's Temperament***

Parents also have their own temperament and need to understand how their own temperament style meshes with their child's temperament. Sometimes parent-child temperaments are very similar; other times they are very different. Both similar and different parent-child temperaments may result in clashes.

Do the questionnaire you did earlier for your child now for yourself. See what you find out about your temperament fit.

### ***My Temperament***

#### ***My activity level:***

This is the amount I move versus how much I relax. I am:

<b>Very Active</b>					<b>Quiet and Relaxed</b>
1	2	3	4	5	

#### ***The regularity of my bodily functions:***

This is the predictability of my sleep times, eating, and bowel movements. I am:

<b>Mostly Regular/Predictable</b>					<b>Mostly Irregular/Unpredictable</b>
1	2	3	4	5	

#### ***My adaptability:***

This is how I adapt to changes in routine, new food, new people, or new places. I usually:

<b>Adapt Quickly</b>					<b>Slow to Adapt</b>
1	2	3	4	5	

#### ***My approach:***

This is how eager I am to try something new versus how fearful or shy I am. Usually I am:

<b>Eager Initial Approach</b>					<b>Initial Withdrawal or Reluctance</b>
1	2	3	4	5	

#### ***My physical sensitivity:***

This is my sensitivity to noise, textures, bright lights, temperature:

<b>Not Sensitive</b>					<b>Very sensitive</b>
1	2	3	4	5	

#### ***My intensity:***

This is the intensity of my reactions or emotions:

<b>High Emotional Intensity</b>					<b>Mild Calm Reaction</b>
1	2	3	4	5	

***My distractibility:***

This is the degree to which I am distracted and notice everything around me versus how much I can shut out external stimuli. Usually I am:

<b>Very Distractible</b>			<b>Not Distractible</b>	
1	2	3	4	5

***My mood:***

This is the degree to which I am happy or positive versus negative. Usually I have a:

<b>Positive Mood</b>			<b>Negative Mood</b>	
1	2	3	4	5

***My persistence:***

This is degree to which I can persist or sustain my attention versus how easily I give up. Usually I have a:

<b>Long Attention Span</b>			<b>Short Attention Span</b>	
1	2	3	4	5

