

Other Optional Activities

Let's Pretend- Spend a short time each day engaging in make believe play with your child. You can pretend to be a doctor and patient, a server and a customer at a restaurant, a teacher and a student ... anything you and your child would enjoy! You can dress-up or just use your imagination. Have fun and take turns being the different roles. Try to keep the play scenario going for 10 minutes!

Play Planning- The most powerful thing you can do to support your child's self-regulation development is to engage him/her in make-believe play. Begin by helping your child talk about their plan for play each day. Ask a few questions like, What do you want to play? Who will you be? What things will you use to play? Then, have your child draw a play plan. Here's a quick guide to play plans ([Click Here for a Video of Play Planning](#)):

1. Child says the plan out loud or uses gestures to show you what he/she wants to do. If your child is using words to express his/her plan, encourage him/her to say "I am going to..." (ex. "I am going to play with blocks." or "I am going to be the mommy.").
2. Child draws who he/she will pretend to be or what he/she will do.
3. If your child's play plans from school include writing, your child may also write his/her plan at home. If your child is not yet writing, write the words for him/her.
4. Time to play! Encourage your child to play what he/she planned for at least 5 minutes before playing something new.

Prop Making- Props have a big impact on make-believe play because they remind children of the role they're playing. Sometimes you may have toys or real objects at home to use as props, and sometimes you'll need to create them. Making and using props that don't look exactly like the real thing is really good for children. It encourages symbolic thinking, and supports fine motor development! Here are some examples:

- Make a tub to wash animals in when pretending to be a Groomer by using a cardboard box or small plastic bin with ripped up blue paper inside
- Decorate a paper towel tube to create a microphone (to put on a concert), a hose (to put out fires), or a telescope (to check out stars on a camping trip)
- Make a cash register using a small box with numbers written on it to play store, movie theater, or restaurant

Physical Self-Regulation Games- When your child participates in songs and games that encourage him/her to follow along with motions or start/stop on a cue he/she is practicing self-regulation, a skill vital for all types of learning. Games like Simon Says and Follow the Leader are fun and educational. The game Red Light, Green Light will also help your child become more self-regulated. To play you will need a piece of paper with a green circle on one side and a red circle on the other. Have your child stand on the opposite side of the room. Hold up the green circle and say "green light" to have your child begin walking towards you. Every once in a while turn the paper over and say "red light" to prompt your child to stop walking. Alternate between the red and green side until your child reaches you. Then you can start over again with a new action (tiptoe, hop, walk backwards, etc.)!

Freeze on the Emotion- Using pictures of emotions (happy, sad, mad, scared, sleepy, and surprised) play Freeze Dance. Choose a song that your child likes to dance to. Play the song and encourage your child to dance. While your child is dancing, hold up one of the emotions. Stop the music, and have your child freeze while making the facial expression to match the picture on the piece of paper. Start the music, encouraging your child to dance again, and hold up a new emotion. Stop the music again, and have your child freeze while making the facial expression to match the picture on the piece of paper. Continue starting and stopping the music about 4-5 times until you reach the end of the song. Try different emotions on different days!

Practice Self-Help Skills- Each day encourage your child to help with dressing him/herself (zipping pants, buttoning shirts, etc.), brushing his/her own teeth (squeezing the toothpaste, putting the toothbrush away, etc.), and helping at meals (pouring juice with help, using a plastic knife to cut soft foods, etc.). Not only will these tasks help your preschooler become more independent, but they also build the fine motor skills that your child needs to write in kindergarten and beyond. Self-help skills can also help children with academic skills. For instance, have your child count to 20 during handwashing. Your child will get practice counting while keeping germs away!

All About Me Book- Help your child learn important information about him/herself by making an "All About Me" book. Using two pieces of paper folded in half create a book for your child to fill in (*stapling optional*). On the cover, have your child draw a picture of him/herself, and then write his/her name across the top. On the first page, have your child draw a birthday cake with the number of candles to match his/her age (add your child's birthday across the top). On the next page, have your child draw a picture of your house (add your address across the top). On the following page, have your child draw a picture of his/her parents (add your names and one phone number across the top). On the next page, have your child draw siblings or other family members such as cousins (add their names across the top). On the last page, have your child draw his/her school (add the name of the school across the top). Read the book with your child at least once a week!