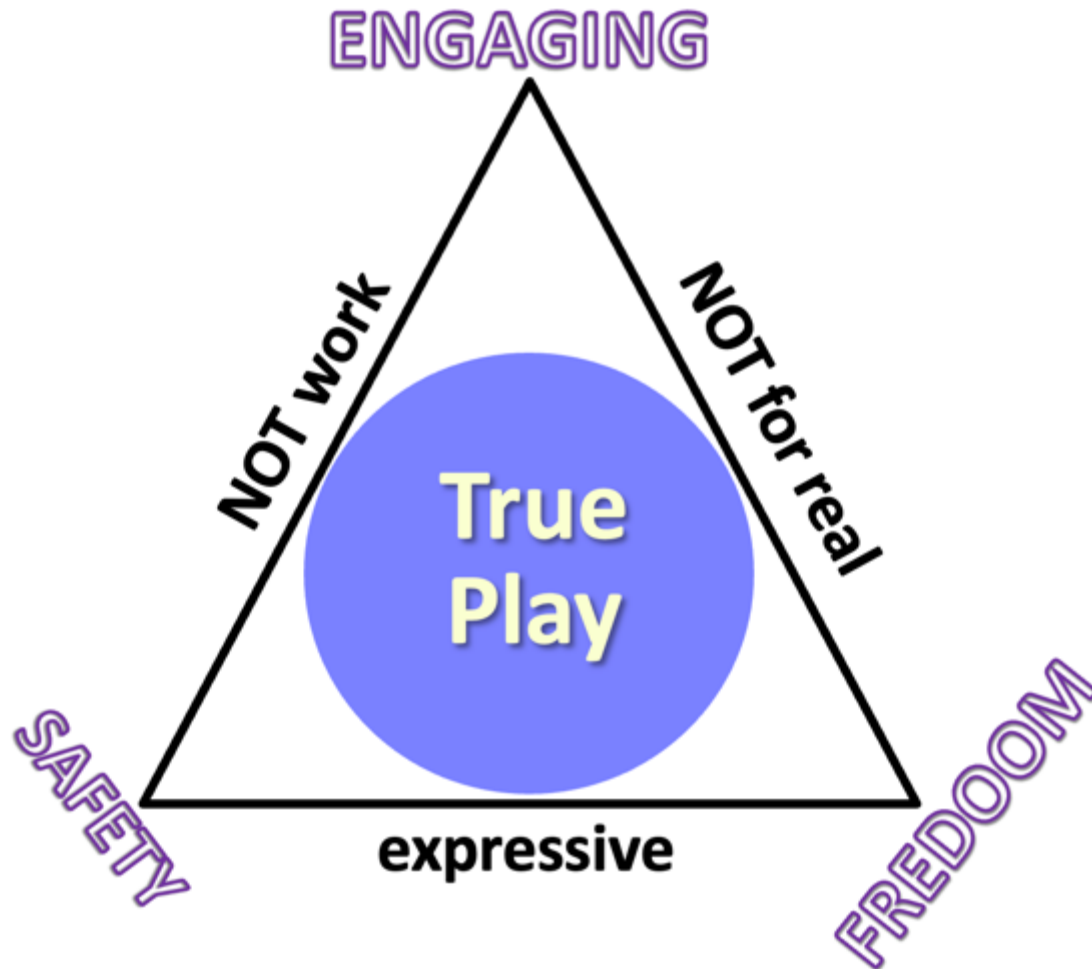


What is true play?

A spontaneous activity that cannot be taught or commanded



Why is PLAY important?

- Helps children make sense of their world
- Builds the brain through experiences not lessons
- Allows children to work through their emotions
- When play is interrupted, emotional well-being and brain development are affected



Benefits of PLAY on brain development

Studies have shown that self-regulation skills were better in those children who were allowed to play without interruption.

When children are engaged in a play activity they stay selectively focused on the situation at present, tune out distractions, and hold the information in their heads.

This then allows children to develop the capacity to reflect, look, listen, and feel before acting on primary emotional urges.

Studies have also shown that ADHD seems to be related to a deficit in play time.

A lack of play in the early years seems to affect mental health, behavioural and academic outcomes

The joy of learning through PLAY

- Play is the best way to learn.
- Play contributes to enjoyment and involvement in learning.
- It fosters children's curiosity, autonomy, social skills, creativity and ability to find solutions to the problems they encounter.

When children play,
all their senses
are awakened, and
their minds develop
in extraordinary
ways.



Making time for **PLAY**

When children play alone, they are creating an identity, and/or creating opportunities to express their emotions.

When children play with each other, they practice how to get along with one another, and/or are working through their emotions.

When children play with adults, attachment increases, and they are experiencing how to feel their emotions in a safe context.



Making time for **PLAY**

‘True’ play programs the brain’s problem-solving networks

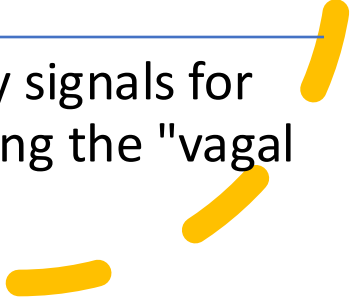
- It is playful activity, not stimulation or instruction, that makes a positive difference in brain development.
- Play builds the brain that can then be used to receive instruction or solve problems.
- The most impressive brain growth happens when play is in the context of warm human connection.

CAUTION!
Play can be
disrupted

The excitement of play and the defense response to threat share roots in the same branch of the autonomic nervous system. Therefore, play relies on the sense of safety to appear. (Porges & Buczynski, 2011)

When not afraid, mammals are able to engage socially and down-regulate defensive reactions using the "vagal brake" which caps the defensive system and makes social engagement possible. (Culp, 2010)

The face and voice are the primary signals for communicating safety and activating the "vagal brake".



Losing the Space to Play

David Elkind in the *Power of Play*

- over the past two decades, children have lost twelve hours of free time a week, including eight hours of unstructured play and outdoor activities.
- free unstructured play, spontaneous pickup games, and self-initiated dramatic play, are replaced by digital devices

Stuart Brown in the *Status of Play* (Encyclopedia of Play Science)

- outdoor play has decreased by 71% in one generation in both the US and the UK.

Escalating diagnoses of childhood anxiety, depression and ADHD has paralleled the loss of play (Peter Gray, 2011)