

The H-N REACH EarlyON at Home

FAMILY NEWSLETTER



I think it's very important - no matter what you may do professionally - to keep alive some of the healthy interests of your youth . . . Children's play is not just kids' stuff. Children's play is, rather, the stuff of most future inventions.

Fred Rogers

TO PLAY, TO LEARN, TO GROW!

Play is an incredibly important part of childhood. When the EarlyON Centres of Haldimand and Norfolk began in 2003 (known as the 'Ontario Early Years Centres back then!'), we created the motto 'To Play, To Learn, To Grow' for our Centres to reflect the important work of play for both the children and the adults in their lives. The following gives examples of what our vision meant:

To Play: Play is a key factor in healthy brain development. Child-led play, or unstructured play, allows children to explore the world around them and helps them find their passions and strengths. Playing with our child helps strengthen those vital connections and allows us to see the world through our child's eyes.

To Learn: Children learn how to share, negotiate, create, imagine, and resolve conflict. Play helps develop better communication skills, vocabulary and language. Play helps them to learn more about the world around them. It is a useful tool for children to rehearse skills and future social roles in a safe context.

To Grow: Play provides opportunities for children to bond with other children, or with their parents. It helps develop self-regulation skills - which are essential for a child's academic and social success. It also benefits their physical health, motor control, strength and endurance!



10 THINGS EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PLAY

1. **Children learn through their play.** Don't underestimate the value of play. Children learn and develop cognitive skills, physical abilities, new vocabulary, social skills and literacy skills.
2. **Play is healthy.** Play helps children grow strong and healthy. It also counteracts obesity issues facing many children today.
3. **Play reduces stress.** Play helps your children grow emotionally. It is joyful and provides an outlet for anxiety and stress.
4. **Play is more than meets the eye.** It is simple and complex. There are many types of play: symbolic, sociodramatic, functional, and games with rules - to name just a few.
5. **Make time for play.** As parents, you are the biggest supporters of your children's learning. You can make sure they have as much time to play as possible during the day to promote development!
6. **Play and learning go hand-in-hand.** They are not separate activities. They are intertwined. Think about them as a science lecture with a lab. Play is the child's lab!
7. **Play outside.** Remember your own outdoor experiences of building forts, playing on the beach, or sledding in the winter? Make sure your children create outdoor memories too!
8. **There's a lot to learn about play.** There is a lot written, and a lot researched. Feel free to learn more about the importance of play.
9. **Trust your own playful instincts.** Remember as a child how play just came naturally? Give your children time for play and see all that they are capable of when given the opportunity.
10. **Play is a child's context for learning.** Children practice and reinforce their learning in multiple areas during play. It gives them a time and place for learning that cannot be replaced with a worksheet.



I Spy

Play this game with your toddler or preschooler on walks, in the car, in the yard, or around the house! Look around for familiar objects and say, "I spy with my little eye, something that is . . . (describe the object). Start off simple and make it more challenging as you play. Use descriptors like fuzzy, soft, hard, big, bumpy, small, cold, etc.



Play takes many forms - each and everyone has a role. Let your child play in the dirt, rough and tumble, explore nature through the seasons, create, investigate, physical and sedentary activities, pretend and communicate. Be an active partner in play!



ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENT PLAY

Know what's age appropriate. Here are estimated times that children, according to their age, can play by themselves: six-months-old is 5 minutes; eighteen-months-old is 20 minutes; two years old is half an hour; and so on.

Start young: Encourage independent play right from infancy during tummy time.

Create a routine: Plan ahead and incorporate independent play about the same time every day.

Schedule time to play together each day: Always be present for your child, and set out time to dedicate specifically to them and what they would like to play.

Rotate toys: Keep it fresh and exciting by rotating toys between rooms, or on and off the floor (keep some in a closet and rotate those every month or so).

Keep the play area clean and organized: Yes, expect a mess, but starting off clean and organized is more of an invitation to play than a messy room!

Retrieved from: <https://www.dominiquedunlop.com/blog/encourage-independent-play>

PLAYDOUGH RECIPE

If you have ever come to an EarlyON Centre in your local area, you would have played with this! Here we share our special recipe with you to enjoy and PLAY! You'll need:

2 cups all-purpose flour

1/2 cup salt

2 tablespoons cream of tartar

1 to 1 1/2 cups of boiling hot water

2 tablespoons of vegetable oil

Food colouring (optional)

1. Mix flour, salt and cream of tartar in large bowl.

2. Add food colouring to the boiling water and add that to the dry ingredients.

3. Stir continuously, add oil, and continue to mix.

4. Allow it to cool down, then take it out and knead it vigorously for a couple of minutes until stickiness is gone.

5. Keeps for weeks in a sealed container or freezer bag!



RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Trying to fit more veggies and healthy snacks into your child's diet? Why not try having fun with your food!

Veggie Faces: No-Bake Vegetable Pizzas and Wraps

Crust:

Whole grain tortilla, or
Whole-wheat pita, or
Whole-wheat flat bread

Sauce:

Reduced-fat cream cheese, or
Hummus, or
Cottage Cheese

Toppings:

Fresh veggies such as: colourful peppers (diced, sliced or cut into shapes), halved cherry tomatoes, sliced cucumbers, carrot sticks or shreds, small broccoli florets, celery sticks, peas, sliced mushrooms, pitted black olives, alfalfa sprouts



1. To assemble, start by spreading the "crust" with one or more types of "sauce".
2. Add desired toppings to make a fun face.
3. To serve, cut into wedges like a pizza, roll up like a burrito or wrap, or fold like a quesadilla!

Retrieved from: <https://twohealthykitchens.com/veggie-faces-no-bake-vegetable-pizzas-and-wraps/>

Ways to Play Outside During a Pandemic

Make a nature sculpture. Bring out some playdough and collect leaves, sticks, stones, and other items with your child. Create something alongside them by sticking the objects into the dough!

Bring story time outside! Bring a blanket and find a shady spot in the yard or at a park and read some stories. If you're leaving your house to find green-space, this could be a nice mid-point break in your walk to take a rest and re-hydrate while enjoying a story!

Go on a nature scavenger hunt. Ask your child for items to find like pinecones, rocks, something red, etc.



WE ARE STILL HERE FOR YOU!

Yes, things have changed a lot over the past month, but we are still here to help! Haldimand-Norfolk REACH is considered an essential service, and even though our sites are closed, we are working at home to stay connected with everyone, and to help those in need during these turbulent times.

If you or your child are in crisis, our Child and Youth Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 1-866-327-3224

Feel free to find us on Facebook - we are the Haldimand-Norfolk REACH EarlyON Child and Family Centre! We're always posting activity ideas, circle time videos and stories, and tips to stay healthy at home.

Have an idea you'd like to see us try? Email us at earlyon@hnreach.on.ca