10 Ways To Enjoy The Children In Your Life!

By Mimi Brodsky Chenfeld

- Talk
- Walk
- Sing
- Exercise
- Rituals
- Play
- Art
- Helpers
- Save

Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children
1. **Talk**

It is so important that conversations happen all through the day! Share comments, observations, questions - share feelings! Invite responses from the children - get past "YES" or "NO" conversations.

Example: "Do you want to wear your long pants or your shorts today?"

"What book shall we read together? You pick it!" | "Which is your favorite?" | "What shall we make for lunch?" Tell me your best lunch!"

The more kids are involved in back and forth conversation the more enriched language becomes. They need to not only hear people speak but to speak to them in kind, loving and interesting ways that encourage them to think, choose, problem solve - etc.

2. **Walk**

Try to walk everyday! Turn your walks into interesting and exciting experiences. Talk and walk. Sing and walk. Stop, look, listen, notice, share - play!

Examples: "Let's count all the dogs we see today!"
"What colors shall we look for on our walk?"
"I see a red sign. What do you see?"
"Isn't that a beautiful flower?"
"Let's smell it. What do YOU think?"

3. **Exercise**

Turn on ANY music with easy rhythms to follow. Clap along, wiggle, shake, bounce, kick, twist, bend, stretch, Do Your Own Thing! But caregivers - please be a good example and join in the fun. The kids NEED to see YOU participating (and, good for YOU, too).

4. **Sing**

In this age of technology, children don't sing as much as they used to. Singing is so GOOD FOR THE SOUL, and language, and connections and fun. Sing as many songs as you can!

Example: "The wheels on the bus...after the familiar stanzas, improvise = the doggies on the bus go ------, the cats on the bus go ---- the pigs on the bus go..." The kids will eagerly add their own ideas!

Teach the kids a song or songs from YOUR childhood. Sing together!
READ

Don’t just read words, read the meaning, use expression, stop and talk about the story - get involved!

Example: "How do you think Goldilocks felt when she saw the bears at her bedside?" "Why do you think all the lambs followed Mary?" (There are no wrong or right answers - just thinking going on). Invite the children to join in the story - if there’s a refrain throughout the story, ask them to say it with you: "Run, run as fast as you can, you can’t catch me - I’m the Gingerbread Man!

The kids love to be part of everything!

RITUALS

Everyone loves rituals, they are part of the human experience. While the kids are home for so long, think about a good morning song or little chant. They are a way of greeting them when they wake or a goodnight song or poem or special hug or rub noses. How about a special way to get them to help clean up - make up a CLEAN UP song - use any tune - keep it simple and fun.

Example: "Pick up. Clean up. Let’s get going! Pick up. Clean up. Let’s get going!"

PLAY

It’s too easy to have kids on video games or devices all day and it is NOT good for growing minds, imagination or creativity. Even a little corner of a crowded room can be a make believe kitchen, cave, ship, car - a towel can become a cape! Stimulate creativity, imagination and language.

ART

On rainy days, set a table with crayons, markers, different sizes of paper, glue, scissors (if safe), make greeting cards for people - make little posters - create collages - be sure to find a wall to hang their work - play music (low volume) as they enjoy the freedom of colors and experimenting with shapes. Ask open, nonjudgmental questions - (demonstrating YOU are interested in what the kids are creating)

Example: "Tell me about your picture / I like the way you painted the grass - what else can you put in your picture?"
9 HELPERS

Kids of ALL ages really like to HELP and feel useful! Based on an experience with my mom's little toddler neighbor, Pnina. When I asked my mom if Pnina was there helping, my mom responded, "My assistant is getting her diaper changed!" - Even our toddlers like to feel they are contributing something important to the life around them. Give them little chores to do- be appreciative-

You are TEACHING your children EVERY MINUTE!

10 SAVE

Recyclable items like boxes, bottles, jars, paper towel rollers, containers, should be saved. Build with them. Add on to them. Make something from them. Make musical instruments. Decorate them.

This also teaches children NOT to just toss out usable items. We have a disgraceful throwaway culture so a good lesson for kids is many of the things we just trash are excellent materials for making 'stuff'.

Good Luck!
I hope you find these suggestions helpful.
Keep it SIMPLE.
Remember, no matter the question, the answer is LOVE!

Mimi Brodsky Chenfeld