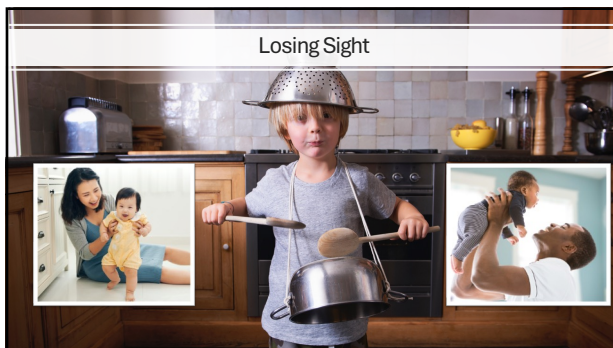




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3

Exploring Power and Experiencing It

Pretend Power

- Experiences Power over/for/with
- Embodies role (claws, wide stance, growl and low voice)
- Uses mental imagery to "see" mom as a bear or prey
- Experiences a mild fear response

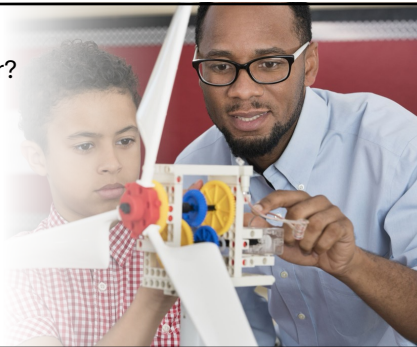
Real Power

- Chooses and adapts the scenario (*agency*)
- Finds success and delight in the play and repeats it (*self-efficacy*)
- Stays regulated through fear response, changes role when needed (*self-regulation*)
- Synchronizes with mom's gestures (*connection*)

4

What is power?

- Agency
- Self-Efficacy
- Self-Regulation
- Connection



5

Agency

- Make choices and decisions to influence events and have an impact on one's world



6

Nurturing a child's sense of Agency

- When children assert their agency, don't get in the way
 - If they use too much glue, next time half-fill the bottles
 - When they sweep but make more of a mess, thank them for helping
- Give children opportunities to assert their agency
 - Give ample time for self-directed play
 - Include children in classroom upkeep (setting up, repairing, choosing toys, and cleaning)

7

Agency in Pretend Play

- Creating a world and the roles within it, changing that world, changing your role
- The roles can be powerful



8

Self-Efficacy

- The belief that one can influence their own life
- Develops in four ways:
 - Find success in smaller steps
 - See others be successful at something you want to try
 - Get encouragement from others
 - Have awareness of your own emotions and how it affects heart rate, breathing, muscle tension (and ultimately your ability to focus)

Based on the work of Albert Bandura
<https://www.simplypsychology.org/self-efficacy.html>



9

Nurturing a child's Self-Efficacy

- Break down activities into smaller steps
 - You start the zipper and they pull it up
- Direct children to other children to accomplish task
 - "Ask Catherine to zip your coat"
- Encourage children for effort as well as success
 - "It took a few tries but you zipped your coat"
- Acknowledge children's emotions
 - "You're getting frustrated. Zipping your coat is hard. Do you want to keep trying, or would you like me to zip it?"


10

Poll

Which strategy do you use most readily when working with children?

- A. Break tasks into smaller steps
- B. Direct child to peers who already possess a skill
- C. Encourage child in their efforts
- D. Help child stay regulated when they challenge themselves.

11



Self-Efficacy in Pretend Play

- Multiple entry points allow child to take on a role that they are comfortable in (Mom, big brother, cat)
- Multiple levels of physicality (Hulk, restaurant server, office worker)
- Interactive nature allows children to learn from others and to get encouragement for others
- Open ended nature of the play allows child to change their role if overwhelmed
- Self-distancing

12

Self-Regulation

- Using the right Executive Function skill at the right time
 - Executive Function skills needed while playing soccer are different than during nap time
- Executive Function Skills
 - Inhibitory Control: impulse control and focus
 - Mental Flexibility: thinking through possible ideas and dealing with change
 - Working Memory

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resource-guides/guide-executive-function/>





13

Executive Function Skills

- Inhibitory control**
 - Impulse control (asking someone to stop instead of hitting them)
 - Focus (listening to an adult's voice rather than the fan)
- Mental flexibility**
 - Thinking through possible ideas (making choices)
 - Dealing with change
- Working memory**
 - Holding necessary information you need to know to complete a task (remembering you are going to put on your boots and coat while you walk over to the coatrack)

14

Nurturing a child's Inhibitory Control

Impulse control

- Encourage start-and-stop games such as freeze dance and red light/green light
- Acknowledge child's emotions when they are acting on impulse ("You're upset. You really want that truck, but Denise is using it right now.")

Focus

- Provide for long periods of uninterrupted play so children focus on something they like doing
- Encourage movement to instrumental music in such a way that children focus on a single element of the music, like the descending violins in Vivaldi's "Summer."
- Limit background music

15

Inhibitory Control in Pretend Play

Impulse control

- Only speak and act in ways that are appropriate for the role
- Refrain from aggression to keep the play going

Focus

- Pays attention to those playing and filters out others
- Flow state encourages longer periods of attention



16

Nurturing a child's Mental Flexibility

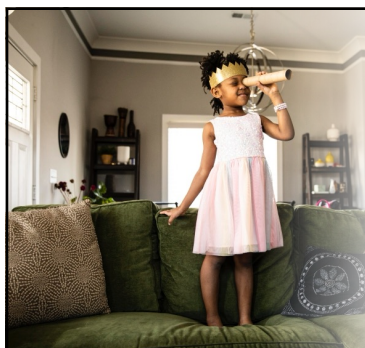
Thinking through possible ideas (making choices)

- Ask questions such as “What’s your plan?” or “What could you do?” to help child engage with materials or peers
- Engage in storytelling or story dictation

Dealing with change

- Give verbal reminders before a transition
- Display visual messages to alert children to changes in routine or environment and refer back to the messages

17



Mental Flexibility in Pretend Play

Thinking through possible ideas (making choices)

- Takes into account mental imagery and real surroundings
- Uses an object to represent a different object
- Chooses scenarios others will also like

Dealing with change

- Steps in and out of imaginary world as needed
- Can change the role or scenario as needed

18

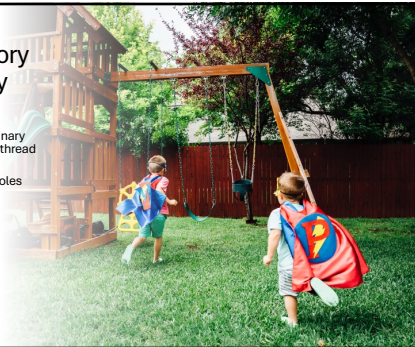
Nurturing a child's Working Memory

- Keep a predictable routine so children can internalize what happens next
- Organize materials so children can mentally map the environment when looking for an item

19

Working Memory in Pretend Play

- Steps in and out of imaginary world without losing the thread of the pretend play
- Keeps track of multiple roles and props




20

Nurturing a child's Self-Regulation

- Give ample time for self-directed play, especially pretend play
- Encourage time for loud physical play
- Practice breathing and calming techniques when children are calm
 - Yoga
 - Breathing ball
- Give space for children to take a break
 - Cozy corner or other space that is less sensory stimulation
- Acknowledge emotions
 - Read books about emotions
- Use touch or proximity intentionally

21



Self-Regulation in Pretend Play

- Experience a wide range of emotions (even if mimicked) while staying regulated
- Highly motivated to keep playing so they are more likely to resolve conflicts or emotional setbacks.
- Enter a flow state so they may play longer.

22

Connection

- Based on an authentic relationship
- Requires adult to know and appreciate the unique characteristics of each child

23

Nurturing a child's feeling of Connection

- Connection is fostered by serve-and-return
 - Engage in conversations with children about their interests
 - Partner in play with children without taking over the play
 - Engage in pretend play with children, including power reversal play

24

Connection in Pretend Play

- Pretend play is often done with others
 - Multiple entry points
- Embodied expression of child's inner thoughts
- Try out roles of power



25

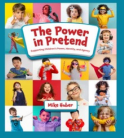
What do you need to encourage pretend

- Give space and time for pretend play
- Help keep play going
 - Mediate conflicts
 - Co-regulate with child
 - Partner in play
- Provide materials to encourage imagination
 - Open-ended materials
 - Real items
 - Purchased replica items

26

We do a disservice to children if we think of them as powerless. Perhaps they are when we view them from our adult world. But if we glimpse inside the world of their imagination, we can see their power is boundless, not in some distant future, but right here, right now, if we only take the time to look.

from *The Power in Pretend*
by Mike Huber



27

Mike Huber

- Facebook and Instagram: Inclusion Includes Us
- Teachingwiththebodyinmind.com
- [Teaching With The Body In Mind \(libsyn.com\)](#)
- Redleaf Press
 - <https://www.redleafpress.org/Power-in-Pretend-Supporting-Young-Childrens-Power-Identity-and-Agency-Through-Play-P3107.aspx>