



Big Body Play
Why Something So Scary is So Good for Children

The slide features a light blue sky with a smiling sun, white clouds, and a green grassy field. In the foreground, a boy in a red shirt and a girl in a white dress are walking with a brown dog.

Brought to you by:

- Frances M. Carlson
- Associate Dean
- Chattahoochee Technical College



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What We'll Discuss Today:

1. All the ways Big Body Play influences a young child's healthy development.
2. Policies that will help support Big Body Play in group care settings.
3. Environments both indoors and outdoors that support Big Body Play.
4. Appropriate and supportive supervision while children play this way.



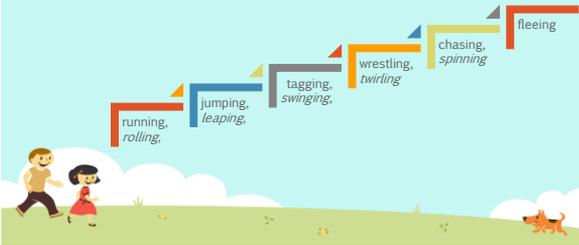
The slide features a light blue sky with white clouds and a green grassy field. In the foreground, a boy in a yellow shirt and a girl in a red dress are walking with a brown dog.

Life was much simpler when we could play a friendly game of red rover and just clothesline the people we didn't like.



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What Do I Mean By "Big Body Play"?



Big body play is the very physical play *that all animal young – including children – do.*

"Birds Do It. Bees Do It. Even Educated Fleas Do It."





Puppies roll...Children roll...why do all animal young roll?



Historical Perspectives

- For young children, rough and tumble play is seemingly universal and dates back to the 12th century (Jarvis, 2007).



Developmental Perspectives

Why do they do it?

- Rough & tumble play has considerable merit in a young child's overall development (Pellegrini, 1987; Pellegrini & Smith, 1998; Pellis & Pellis, 2007).



To learn how _____ I am



- Strong
- Tall
- Fast
- Flexible
- Heavy
- Controlled



BBP Benefits

- Physical
- Emotional
- Social
- Cognitive
- Language



Physical Benefits



- Intense physical exertion
- Access to appropriate physical contact



Social Benefits

- ▶ Signaling and detecting
- ▶ Alternating and changing roles.
- ▶ Turn-taking and reciprocity



Friendships

- When a child knows how to correctly “read” and understand what another is communicating through his eyes or his gestures, she is better able to form strong friendships.



King of the Hill



- If the “King” never changed out with the other children, most of the children would tire quickly of the game.





War, or Peace?



- The skills children gain from big body play **are the very skills** which **allow** them to explore the complex dynamics of justice mediation and peace keeping.

Psychological Benefits



- BBP gives children a chance to blow off steam.
- After 15 minutes of intense physical activity, **children are calmer for a longer period of time.**
- The longer children go without any BBP, the more rowdy and aggressive they are when they finally get to do it.

Ripped from the Headlines

Texas School Beats ADHD by Tripling Recess Time



School beats ADHD by tripling recess time

© 2014 Eagle Mountain Elementary School

"But one school in Texas seems to have gotten to the bottom of the ADHD mystery, by introducing more play time. An increase in play-time threefold has drastically reduced behavior problems such as ADHD in the school in what teachers are regarding as a miracle cure. Eagle Mountain Elementary has changed the way children are given free time, in a way which differs from the standard model of break and dinner times that many other schools are ruled by. The school has added an extra hour of free time for the kindergartners per day, broken up into 4 15-minute sections, in addition to their normal lunch time, and it is this extra play time which has seemed to suppress behavior problems. The teachers state that since the addition of the extra breaks, the children are less fidgety, have increased attention spans and make more eye contact when they are learning. Eagle Mountain is not alone, several schools across Texas, Oklahoma and California have all been experimenting with the make-up of the school day in order to find what works to get the best out of the children."



Time for me to practice what I preach:

Jump

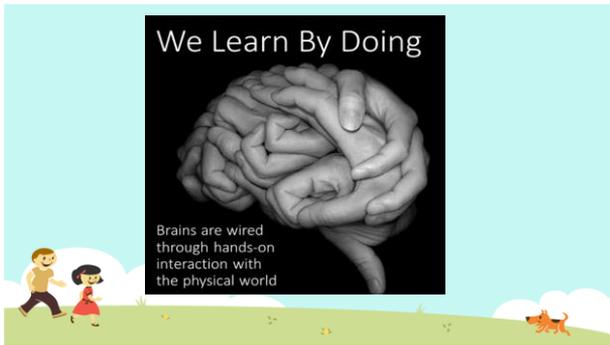


Cognitive/Language Benefits

- Because children are not natural turn-takers, they often have to discuss "the rules" or the plans for the play before they begin, and they discuss how to adjust things as they









Risk-Taking Benefits



Supporting Risks



- The focus has been on preventing *any* injury rather than on preventing serious injury while providing children with appropriate risk opportunities.



Myths & Misperceptions

Children Who Go Up The Slide 76% More Likely To Commit Murder

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Myth 1: Rough & tumble play is the same as real fighting



How to tell them apart:

Rough Play

1. Children's expressions are often characterized by **smiles**, they are often **laughing**.
2. Children involved are also **willing participants**.
3. Children **keep returning** for more.

Fighting

1. Children's expressions are characterized by **frowns** as well as **tears**.
2. One participant is usually **dominating** another one.
3. As soon as an episode resolves, the **unwilling participants often flee**.



Myth 2: It will become real fighting

From the CDA Assessment Observation Instrument.

"Rough play is minimized. Example: defuses rough play *before it becomes a problem*; makes superhero play more manageable by limiting time and place."

From **Georgia's** Bright from the Start Rules and Regulations for Child Care Learning centers:

"Staff shall not engage in, or allow children or other adults to engage in, *activities that could be detrimental to a child's health or well-being*, such as, but not limited to, horse play, rough play, wrestling..."









BBP Policies

"Now here is where I have something to say about rough and tumble play. Where I work now there is a small group of older boys that play pretty rough games with each other. They have gone from wrestling contently to wrestling hurtfully that might be seen as from playing to fighting, but could be seen happening in any progression of play on any theme. They also have been hurt, not seriously, but enough to draw attention to the risks of rough play. However, instead of taking steps to limit the play, we recognized that this kind of play was natural and important for children, maybe more so for boys; and we tried to formalized it. I brought the group together and we discussed the rules that we would need to play the wrestling game and be safe. I wrote them all down, which they decided included the need for a referee to make sure everyone was following the rules, and designated a space to play the game, on some mats but it could have been big pillows. The kids played wrestling for the rest of the day and many other days in a completely safe and satisfying way and I was able to document little pieces of the experiences to tell families and colleagues about it."

--Patrick

Ronero/EC Teacher, Mission Neighborhood Centers, Inc.



Indoor Environments



Outdoor Environments



Support & Supervision



Childhood happens once.
Climb the slide.



Big Body Play Helps Children Meet (and Exceed) Standards



Landy and Taylor are outside on the playground.
Landy says to Taylor, "Warma wrestle?" Taylor nods his head up and down, indicating, "Yes!"



Landy put his arms around Taylor's back and pulled him backwards onto the ground, the two Taylor went both laughing.



When Landy stopped Taylor over onto his back, Taylor stopped laughing and scrunched his face in a grimace. Landy let go of Taylor and Taylor got up. I asked Landy, "How did you know to let go?" Landy replied, "I could just tell."

What Children Learn Through Wrestling

According to *Bright From the Start* - Georgia Pre-K's governing entity - a child is "ready" for Kindergarten when:

... feelings of both self and others are recognized
Feelings will be identified and expressed appropriately.
Feelings of others will be understood and accepted.
An increasing capacity for self-control will be evident.

... social and interpersonal skills are emerging
Ability to work or play cooperatively with others will be evident.
Ability to form appropriate relationships with children and adults will be demonstrated.
Emerging conflict resolution skills will be evident.
Increasing capacity to follow rules and routines will be evident.

... communication with others is effective
Listening skills will be evident.
Ability to follow simple directions will be evident.
Expressing needs and wants will be demonstrated.
Use of language to interact socially with others will be demonstrated.

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