



Encouraging Pretend Play

It's important for parents and care givers to recognize that one of the ways children cope most naturally is to play about what they've seen and experienced. Difficult times often leave children with deep and confusing feelings, so playing about such a time afterwards can be a way of safely reliving something that was hard for them to experience. Pretend play gives children a chance to rehearse events that may be worrisome to them and to work on their feelings about the world around them and their place in it.



How You Can Support Pretend Play

- Provide plenty of time and space for play.
- If possible, have some props available: dolls, blocks, blankets, scarves, puppets, wheeled toys, tables, or large box or tent; open-ended toys.
- Encourage children to use their own ideas or make believe for their pretend play.
- Remind them (and yourself) that "this is only pretend."
- When children know that adults value their creative play, they can use their play ideas and actions to work on understanding what's happened, what's still the same, and what's now different.
- Through play, they can develop thinking and problem-solving skills that can be transferred to everyday, real-life coping.

"For children, play is both a serious and necessary business: a way for them to try on different roles, pretend to be bigger than they really are, stronger than they really are, or even, at times, smaller than they really are."

—Fred Rogers

