



25 ways to get to playful parenting

START OUT EXPLORING WHAT PLAY WAS LIKE WHEN YOU WERE SMALL



1. Did anyone play with you?
2. Were you intentionally left out of play?
3. Did you get in trouble when you were playful or silly?
4. Did adults you know ever play with children?
5. Do you remember a really fun time when an adult played with you?

NEXT, THINK AND TALK ABOUT HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT PLAY NOW.



6. Are there elements of play that scare you? Like if your child wants to play guns and shooting, or wants to get naked?
7. Do you worry that there are other things that “need to get done,” or that you are wasting time by playing?
8. Are you concerned that your play might somehow be rewarding bad behavior?
9. Do you worry that you don't know how to stop play without it causing crying?
10. Do you wonder if play with your kids is too loud or too boisterous, or if someone will get hurt?

WORK THROUGH YOUR FEELINGS



11. Vent or whinge about your own early play experiences if they annoyed you.
12. Relive by retelling any good or bad playtimes from your childhood.
13. Describe the funniest games you played.
14. Ask your listening partner to make your child's play requests that drive you crazy, or that you are most reluctant about, then respond by giving your partner a piece of your mind. Yell or shout out loud everything you would love to say to your child about the games he asks you to play.
15. Tell your listening partner: "I won't play. Not today. Not ever. Go away." Get your feelings heard.
16. Act silly about how angry or worked up you get when you don't want to play.
17. Try laughing through your whole listening time, and see what feelings bubble up.

PRACTICE BEING PLAYFUL



18. Beg, borrow, steal and try games and jokes. Keep a game file.
19. Use Hand in Hand's website for playful ideas about teeth-brushing, bedtime, and picky eating.
20. Read Larry Cohen's Playful Parenting book.
21. Start small. Begin with two minutes of play a day, and work up.
22. Watch physical comedy for ideas (and fun). Laurel and Hardy are classic.
23. Find a fun class that will stretch your imagination and maybe even your body.
24. Get some Mom friends together and have sock fights, or pull out Twister to get the giggles going.
25. Follow the laughter. Don't put pressure on yourself to “be funny.” Your kids will adore you giving them a piggy back ride, or pretending you can't find them hiding.