

## The Power of Play

### **Play is social and fun**

Our children play for the sake of playing — because they enjoy it. They are not consciously trying to improve their motor skills, practise new sounds, or make connections with others — yet these are important benefits that happen through play. When our children are having a good time playing with us, they learn in a natural way.

### **Play encourages taking turns**

If our children are going to learn to communicate, they must get involved in two-way interactions. Taking turns with actions or words is the essential element of shared play and of conversation. “I take a turn; then you take a turn”, and so on!

### **Play is easy to respond to, even without words**

One of the benefits of play is that children will respond to it, even if they have a limited ability or desire to talk. The active side of play — like falling down in “Ring around the Rosie”, or clapping in “If You’re Happy and You Know It”— gives children who have trouble talking a chance to take part. In addition, play helps children connect physical actions with the words that describe those actions — the best way to reinforce understanding and learning.

### **Play involves repetition**

It’s possible to repeat words and actions more often in a play activity than it is during our daily activities. We can’t pour David’s milk ten times at breakfast, but we can spend hours pouring water in the bathtub, having a pretend tea party, or singing “This is the way we pour our milk.”

### **Play integrates many of the senses**

Our children are more likely to learn and remember what we’re talking about when they see, hear, feel, smell and taste it. If they hear the word “apple” — and see it, feel its roundness, smell it and taste it — they are more likely to understand “apple” and be able to use the word later. Learning is strengthened when several senses send the same message to the brain.

*Play is one of the best ways for our children to learn how to communicate and to get along with others.*