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Achieving Resilient and Inspiring Families

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WELCOME TO THE ARIF TIMES!

In this month's bulletin, we are highlighting the theme of PLAY! While play is often associated with fun, it also plays a crucial role in promoting lifelong health. Nurturing well-being goes beyond just physical fitness; it involves engaging in active play, spending quality time with family and connecting with children in fun, meaningful ways. Active play, whether through sports, outdoor adventures, or playful activities at home, strengthens the body by improving cardiovascular health, flexibility and endurance. It also enhances coordination and energy levels, making it easier to stay active throughout life. Beyond physical benefits, play nurtures mental wellness by relieving stress, boosting mood and encouraging creativity.

Spending quality time with family, particularly through play with children, deepens emotional bonds and provides a sense of security and connection that supports mental health. Children naturally use play to explore their world, express themselves and develop problem-solving skills. When adults join in, they not only aid in a child's development but also find a valuable opportunity to relieve stress and immerse themselves in the present moment, leading to therapeutic benefits.

Through play, we cultivate lasting habits that support physical health, emotional well-being and mental clarity, enriching our lives at every stage. So, let's embrace the power of PLAY!

Nurturing Lifelong Health Through Active Play

by Fadzlynn Fadzully

“Active play in childhood is the cornerstone of a lifetime of health and happiness.”

In a world increasingly dominated by screens and sedentary behaviours, ensuring children remain physically active has never been more crucial. As Clinical Exercise Physiologists, our work revolves around understanding the intricate ways physical activity influences a child's development.



From fitness assessments to exercise testing and using tools like the Total Gross Motor Development Version 3 (TGMD3) for assessing fundamental movement skills in young children, we see firsthand the profound impact of early physical activity. It is not just about keeping children active; it is about laying the groundwork for a lifetime of health and well-being. The Singapore Physical Activity Guidelines serve as a crucial framework for parents and educators to ensure that children get the movement they need to thrive.

The guidelines for preschool children (0-6 years) emphasize the importance of limiting sedentary time and promoting at least 180 minutes of physical activity each day.



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This should include a variety of activities, from interactive play to outdoor exploration. For older children and youths (7-17 years), the focus shifts to accumulating 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity daily, along with muscle and bone-strengthening exercises. These recommendations highlight the need for variability and affordances in physical activities, ensuring that children are exposed to different types of movement, which helps develop a wide range of motor skills and promotes overall physical literacy.



Early exposure to physical activity is not just about building strong muscles and bones; it is also about enhancing cognitive development through the concept of neuroplasticity (Tandon et al, 2016). During the early years, a child's brain is highly adaptable, forming new synapses with each novel experience. According to Hotting and Roder (2013), engaging in varied physical activities stimulates the brain, fostering the formation of new neural connections that support cognitive and emotional growth. By engaging in varied physical activities, children enhance their experiential quotient, which refers to the range and depth of experiences that contribute to cognitive and emotional growth.



Children are keen observers and often mirror the behaviours of those they look up to. By seeing parents and caregivers prioritize physical activity, they learn to value and integrate it into their own lives. When children observe adults prioritizing exercise and integrating it into daily routines, they are more likely to adopt these habits themselves (Yao & Rhodes, 2015). This positive influence is crucial in building lifelong habits of physical activity. Moreover, family involvement in play and exercise not only strengthens familial bonds but also enhances the child's sense of security and belonging, which are essential for emotional and social development (Holt et al, 2011).

The importance of being physically active from an early age cannot be overstated when considering the long-term benefits. A study conducted by Telama et al (2005) revealed that active children are more likely to continue being active into adulthood, reducing their risk of chronic diseases such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes.



Early physical activity is associated with improved mental health outcomes, including reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression (Dale et al, 2019). The experiences children have with physical activity during their formative years share their attitudes towards exercise for the rest of their lives.

By embracing these guidelines and making physical activity a daily priority, we empower our children with the tools they need for a healthier, happier future. Early exposure to diverse physical activities, combined with positive role modelling, lays the groundwork for a strong foundation in lifelong health. The early years are a crucial period of rapid growth and development, where each experience profoundly shapes both body and mind. Prioritizing physical activity and play during this formative time does more than just enhance immediate well-being - it paves the way for a sustained physical, cognitive, and emotional health throughout their lives. By investing in active play today, we are truly investing in the wellbeing of tomorrow's adults.



Holt, N. L., Kingsley, B. C., Tink, L. N., & Scherer, J. (2011). Benefits and challenges associated with sport participation by children and parents from low-income families. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 12(5), 490-499.

Hötting, K., & Röder, B. (2013). Beneficial effects of physical exercise on neuroplasticity and cognition. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 37, 2243-2257. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2013.04.005>.

Tandon, P., Tovar, A., Jayasuriya, A., Welker, E., Schober, D., Copeland, K., Dev, D., Murriel, A., Amso, D., & Ward, D. (2016). The relationship between physical activity and diet and young children's cognitive development: A systematic review. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 3, 379 - 390. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2016.04.003>.

Telama, R., Yang, X., Viikari, J., Välimäki, I., Wanne, O., & Raitakari, O. (2005). Physical activity from childhood to adulthood: A 21-year tracking study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 28(3), 267-273.

Yao, C., & Rhodes, R. (2015). Parental correlates in child and adolescent physical activity: a meta-analysis. *The International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-015-0163-y>.

For more information on Singapore Physical Activity Guidelines, please visit <https://www.activesgcircle.gov.sg/campaigns/spag>

SINGAPORE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN (0 - 6 YEARS)

Preschool children should meet all recommendations for physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep habits to reap health benefits associated with regular physical activity and reduced sedentary behaviour.



MOVE WITH FUN & GROW

RECOMMENDATIONS

0-2 YEARS:

0-2 YEARS:		
Sedentary Time	Physical Activity	Quality Sleep
START PLAYING Limit the amount of time spent being sedentary, with recreational screen time not recommended. Instead, engage in imaginative play and storytelling activities. 	PLAY MORE <u>0-1 years</u> Encourage interactive floor-based activities for a minimum of 30-minutes a day. <u>1-2 years</u> Spend at least 180 minutes doing a variety of physical activities of any intensity, spread throughout the day. Aim for daily outdoor play.	SLEEP WELL 0-3 months: 14 to 17 hours 4-11 months: 12 to 15 hours 1-2 years: 11 to 14 hours 



3-6 YEARS:

3-6 YEARS:		
Sedentary Time	Physical Activity	Quality Sleep
START PLAYING Limit the amount of time spent being sedentary, keeping recreational screen time to less than an hour a day.	PLAY MORE Spend at least 180 minutes doing a variety of physical activities, of which at least 60 minutes should be moderate- to vigorous-intensity activity, spread throughout the day.	SLEEP WELL 3-4 years: 10 to 13 hours 5-6 years: 9 to 13 hours



TIPS



Create a home environment that encourages movement and exploration.



Introduce activity based games. E.g. Animal movements, dance activity.



Encourage a wide variety of movements like running, jumping, catching, throwing, and kicking, in different environments, to build Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS).



Visit outdoor playgrounds for your child to engage in social play and interact with others while being active.

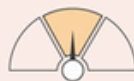


Establish a consistent bedtime routine to help your child develop good habits.

EXERCISE INTENSITY



Light
Can talk in full sentences and sing



Moderate
Can talk in phrases or short sentences but cannot sing



Vigorous
Have difficulty
talking



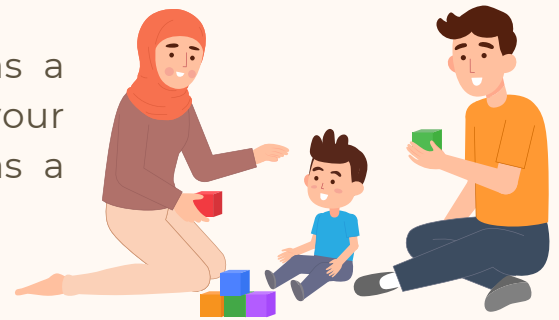
Quality Time with Family and Playing with Kids in Islam.

by Ustaz Nuzhan bin Abdul Halim

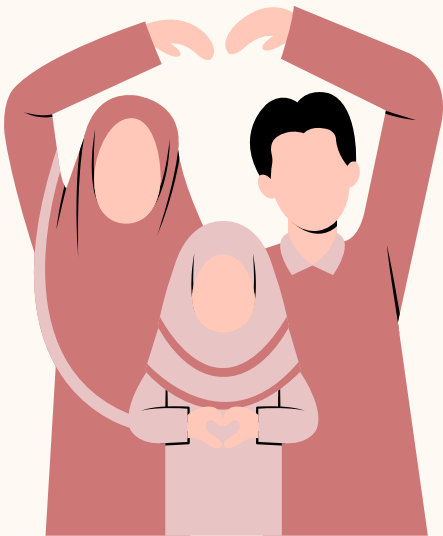


Spending quality time with family and engaging in play with children is highly valued. The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH offer clear guidance on the importance of these practices for strengthening family bonds and enhancing overall well-being.

The Prophet PBUH said: “Indeed, your body has a right over you, your eyes have a right over you, your family has a right over you, and your guest has a right over you.” (Reported by Bukhari and Muslim)



The Prophet PBUH showed the value of quality time through his actions with his wife, Saiyidatina Aisha. During a busy mission, he still found time to play with her by racing together. This wasn't just for fun but a way to keep their relationship strong despite his many responsibilities. This teaches us that even when we are busy, it is important to make time for our loved ones as the task of nurturing strong and lasting relationships supersede other tasks.



AlBukhari narrated that the Prophet PBUH would come out to the people during the 'Eid prayer and then he would lead them in prayer. After the prayer, he would say to the children: 'Come to me, O children!' He would play with them and show them affection (Sahih Bukhari, 971). The Prophet also allowed his grandchildren, Hasan and Husain, to play in the mosque during prayer. He showed patience and kindness, letting them climb on his back. This demonstrates that Prophet Muhammad PBUH valued play and affection for children, even in sacred places.

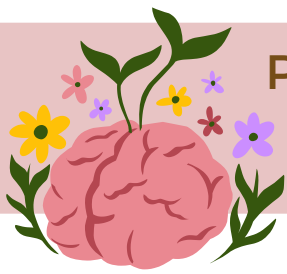
Playing with children is not just for the sake of having fun. It is crucial for their emotional and social growth. Through play, parents can connect with their children, building trust, love and security; fundamental in nurturing positive relationship in the family.



Playing together also provides a chance to teach importance values and skills. Parents can model kindness, teamwork, and problem-solving skills during playtime. These lessons are more easily learned in a fun and relaxing setting, making play a great educational tool.

The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH emphasize the importance of spending quality time with family and playing with children. By following the Prophet's example and dedicating time for interactive activities, parents can strengthen family bonds, support their children's growth, and create a loving and supportive environment. Embracing these practices not only enriches family life but also aligns with the core values of love and connection in Islam.





Play for Mental Wellness

by Siti Nurzakiah Binte Zar'an

The numerous benefits of play for children are widely acknowledged, and research increasingly shows that children gain even more from play that includes their parents or adult caregivers.



But what about adults? How do they engage in play activities?

As we mature, we often leave behind what we perceive as "childish things", such as engaging in play or participating in activities purely for enjoyment (Brown & Vaughan, 2009). In the hustle and bustle of the daily grind, we may forgo or de-prioritise hobbies, new skills, or leisure activities like sports, playing a musical instrument, sewing or leather crafting. Adults need to include play in their lives INTENTIONALLY.

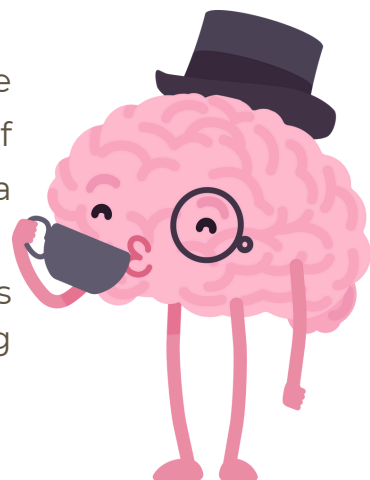


Is adult play simply a form of escapism?

When not approached with mindfulness, excessive play can lead to unhealthy dependencies. However, when pursued with intention, play becomes an essential tool to promote mental wellbeing, offering a valuable outlet for relaxation and creativity. Embracing play in adulthood can enhance our quality of life and contribute significantly to our overall mental health.

So, how exactly does play contribute to mental wellness?

1. Play relieves stress. Play is fun and that emotional response releases endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals.
2. Improve brain functioning. Do you notice that you tend to be forgetful, but when you play Monopoly, you can remember if your opponent owed you rent? Play challenges the brain in a fun and non-stressful condition.
3. Play improves relationships and connections with others. It is a way for parents to attune to their children's world, paving way for a more trusting and secure bond.



***Make Play a priority for your mental wellness.
Schedule your next playtime!***

Brown, S. L., & Vaughan, C. C. (2009). Play: how it shapes the brain, opens the imagination, and invigorates the soul. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BB16959897>