Play and Cerebral Palsy

Supporting Play in Children with Motor Differences

Jaclyn Bender, OT





Objectives

1

Understand the importance of play in promoting development in children

2

Explore how to support play when there are varying motor skills, communication differences, and/or support needs

3

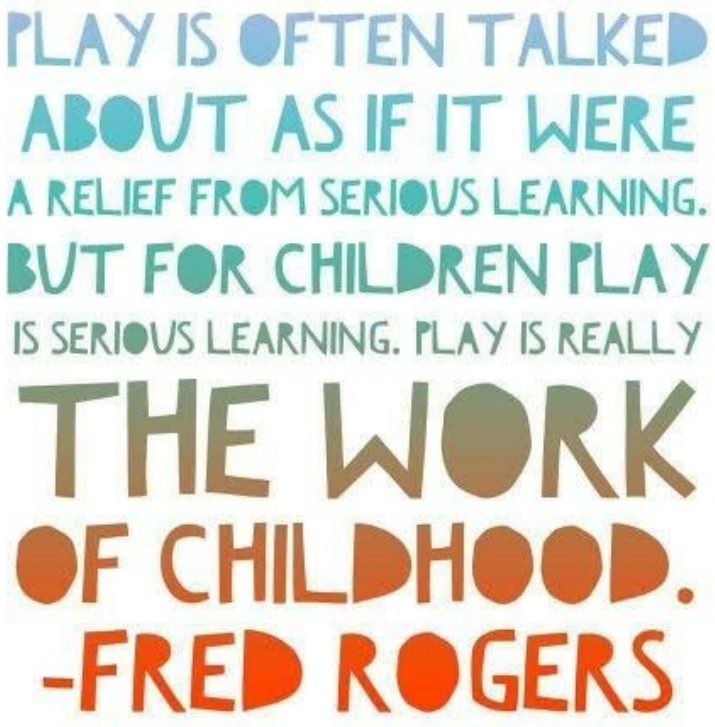
Introduce ongoing CP Play Project for community resources

Play definition

A voluntary and enjoyable activity, done for the pleasure in the experience itself, often involving experimentation and exploration in a low stress environment

Context specific!

Play is a natural <u>right</u> of childhood that helps build social, emotional, motor, and problem-solving skills



Types of Play

Social Play Stages

- Unoccupied: making movements and discovering how body works
- Attunement: caregiver-child exchanges for emotional attachment
- Solitary: child plays alone
- Onlooker: child observes others playing
- Parallel: playing side by side with similar toys, but no direct interaction
- Associative: starts to interact with others, but no cooperation involved
- Cooperative/Social: organized group play, involving others in the activity
- Games with Rules: structured activities that focus on executive functioning skills

Types of Play (cont)

Object Play Stages

- Exploratory: exploration of single objects (can include sensory play)
- Relational: Discovering how two or more objects go together
- Functional: utilizing objects for their intention such as kitchen sets, babies
- Symbolic/Pretend: using an object to represent something else
- Dramatic: assuming roles and acting out scenarios
- Constructive: using materials to create with a goal in mind
- Games with Rules: structured activities that focus on executive functioning skills
- Fine motor: using small muscles in hands and fingers to manipulate items
- Gross motor: using large body movements
- Language play: experimenting with sounds, rhythms, rules, and structures of language



Developmental benefits of play

- Brain Development- cognition, executive functioning, attention, problem solving
- Emotional Wellness- self regulation, resilience
- Movement Skills- Fine and gross motor skills, body awareness, balance, force gradation
- Language- acquisition, receptive and expressive language
- Social Skills- creativity, risk evaluation, cooperation, conflict resolution

Cerebral Palsy and Play Barriers

Personal: *motor, communication, sensory processing differences;* pain; fatigue

Interpersonal: *attitudinal; social stigma; low expectations;* time constraints; familial stress

Environmental: inaccessible *set ups,* facilities, classrooms, playgrounds; lack of equipment; minimal programming

Policy: inadequate funding; lack of personnel; societal priorities

Play Project

- UW OT Capstone Student Gina Sylvester enters scene
- Together, identified a curiosity of what resources the CP community might need and where they look to get it
- Play is an essential occupation[al therapy!]
- Play is hard for adults! When play looks different, it can be overwhelming
- Gina conducted a literature review to understand what the research says about resources on play and CP.



Identified Themes

Play is essential to a child's development and well-being. It plays an important role in brain development; it fosters emotional wellness, it develops our motor skills and becomes a foundation for our social skills.

Children with higher levels of disability experience barriers to the important development that occurs because of barriers to play. Similarly to this, parents of children with high levels of disability have varying attitudes towards engaging their child in play, ie some struggle to know how best to support their child's play.

Caregivers often go to the internet to find information about their child's condition and felt a lack of guidance from their practitioner of where to go while also feeling like they could not share with their practitioner that they went to social media sites to find answers.

Phase 1: Collaborator Engagement

Surveys

- Staff and caregivers across interdisciplinary clinics at the Waisman Center
- Staff in CP Clinic specifically

Results of survey guided interviews with caregivers and children in clinic to understand barriers to play

RESULTS: caregivers and children have challenges when engaging in play including activities to fit their needs, positioning, and set up. Also discovered that caregivers prefer easily accessible, online resources. Videos and readable content are a plus.

Phase 2: Resource Creation







New ways to support play

01

Know about Vista Play- that children experience play as independent despite having an adult physically supporting them

02

Prioritize a child's self-determination, autonomy, and peer-to-peer inclusion over purely conventional motor milestones

03

Encourage onlooker's play as a way to participate

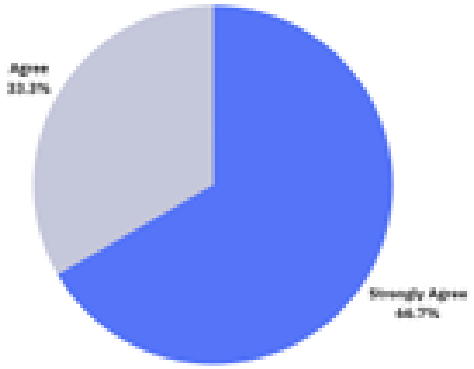
04

Use humor and communication skills

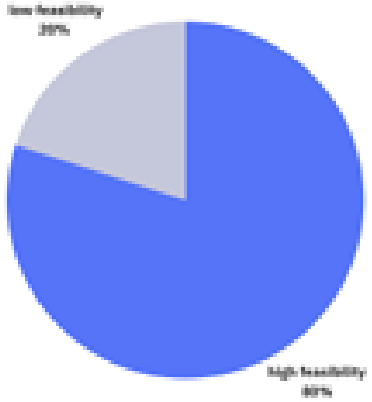
Play areas of focus

- Floor Based
- Sensory
- Adapted Fine Motor
- Choice in activity
- Switch activation

Caregivers found the digital resources to be engaging and easy to understand



80% of practitioners say there is high feasibility to creating digital resources to increase accessibility.



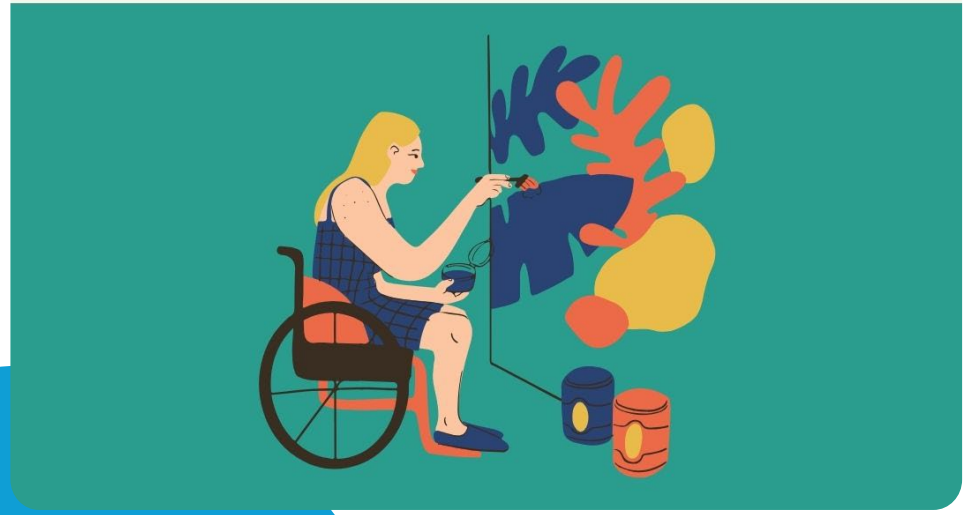
Phase 3: Resource Feedback

- Survey to to families in CP Clinic to view and provide feedback on resources created

03. Adapted fine motor play

Fine motor tasks can be challenging due to varying tone in their hands. To reduce this challenge, try painting with sponges or using easy to grab item such as bigger play pieces for a board game can help to support their participation.

QR code for video model



Future directions

- Collaboration with CASC
- Create/complete more videos, outside of GMFCS levels
- Promote on Waisman Center's social media pages

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Questions?

jaclyn.bender@wisc.edu

