

big PLANS *in print*

Connecting Big Plans' Parents to their Communities

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Encouraging a Shy Preschooler to Participate

Some young children bounce through life eager to try new experiences. Others hang back, cling to a parent's hand, or duck behind Mom or Dad to peer out at the activities going on around them instead of joining in. If you're the parent of a shy preschooler, you know that balancing the new experiences that your child needs with the safety and security you want to provide can be a tricky task.

Often shy children hang back because they are afraid of doing things wrong. Letting them know it's all right to make mistakes and giving them an opportunity to move into social situations at their own pace is often the key to helping

them become participants rather than observers. Want to help?



Here are some ways to help shy preschoolers become a part of the group:

Allow Adjustment Time

"Shy people simply require extra time to adjust to novel or stressful situations, including even everyday conversations and social gatherings," says Bernardo J. Carducci, founder of the Shyness Research Institute. One way to help shy children adjust is to give them a trial run of a new experience. For instance, go a little early to a party or an outing so your child gets used to the setting before it fills with people. Pave the way for the first day of school or a new activity by touring the building ahead of time. Try these tips for making a preliminary trip:

- Choose a time when it will be uncrowded to allow her to look around without social anxiety.
- Point out where different activities will occur. Show her where she'll hang her coat, where she'll sit, and where you'll meet her at the end of the day.
- Introduce her to the teacher, coach or librarian.
- If possible, let her play with the toys or read a few books. This will raise her comfort level and make her adjustment easier when the time comes.

Practice Social Skills

They say that practice makes perfect, and getting a shy child comfortable with a new situation is no exception. If you want your preschooler to greet the teacher rather than mumbling or hiding behind you, let him play the teacher's role. Act shy and have him coach you to speak up and look the teacher in the eye. Then reverse roles



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and have him show you he can do it correctly. If he's heading to a birthday party, practice handing over a gift and wishing his friend a happy birthday.



Role-play asking another child to play a game, share a toy, or go down a slide together. The more often he practices, the more natural these skills will become. Be sure to model these social skills yourself when you're in public.

Schedule Play Dates

Make play dates with another shy child, preferably one who shares similar interests. "Whenever possible, allow your child to choose the playmate," says Lisa Hess, a school counselor from Pennsylvania. "And, if you can host the play date or meet at a familiar place, your child will feel more comfortable as well, which can help relieve nerves." Talk ahead of time about ways to make the visitor feel comfortable, too. Sometimes helping another child adjust will bring your introvert out of her shell.

Later, schedule play dates with a more boisterous child, who may encourage your child to try new activities. Extroverts may model the social skills your child needs. Avoid setting up play dates with domineering children who bully or criticize, because they can make the situation worse. The more children your child gets to know, the more likely she'll be to participate in group activities. Plus, seeding a new school year or activity with at least one friend makes adjustment easier.

Encourage Interaction

When your child hangs back in a new situation, allow him to cling a few minutes while you reassure him that you understand how he feels. "Staying calm and relaxed is key," says Hess. "When everyone else's child is playing independently, parents may feel

pressured to involve a reluctant child before he or she is ready." Once he's more comfortable, suggest a way for him to get involved. Point out a child who is alone. If that child has been to your house for a play date, it will be easier for him to approach her. Or find an activity he especially enjoys. You may need to walk him over to get him started. Then try to include another child: "I bet Parker would love to help you build that block tower, wouldn't you, Parker?" When the other child joins him, gradually back away.

When your child makes progress in a social situation, reinforce the success. "I noticed you shared the trucks with Caitlyn. That made her very happy." "It was brave of you to ask Liam if you could play too. You two had a lot of fun, didn't you?" "Reinforcing the positive feelings the interaction created in your child will help your child connect those good feelings to actions he finds difficult, such as sharing or inviting others to play," Hess says. Positive feelings will make him more likely to repeat the behavior.

Expecting an introvert to be a social butterfly is unrealistic, but helping your child become more comfortable around others and giving him the necessary social skills to make friends and participate in activities will help him live a fuller, happier life.

By Laurie Edwards. Reprinted with permission by Education.com. For more articles on Preschool Play, visit www.education.com.

Free Books Online

Reading with children is a wonderful way to build vocabulary, increase comprehension and spend quality time together. Since it's not always possible to have a book with you, we've found some wonderful online sites where parents & educators can find hundreds of free books for children!

You'll find many popular picture books such as "Ladybug Girl" and "Llama, Llama" along with tons of read-aloud classics like "Peter Pan" and "My Father's Dragon".

These stories can be shared on your smartphone, iPad and laptop -- they are perfect for facilitating a story time sessions or as a way to take books with you on-the-go.

For the full list of websites and access to 100's of online books, visit [Edventures with Kids {http://www.kcedventures.com/blog/finding-free-kids-books-online-books-for-kids}](http://www.kcedventures.com/blog/finding-free-kids-books-online-books-for-kids)



At home Activity

Two Self-Esteem Boosters for Children



At a quiet point of the day, or in the evening, before tucking your child into bed, you can play the "I'm proud of you game". To do this, simply say to your child: "I'm so proud of you. Do you know why I'm proud of you today?" Have your child try to guess. When they give you an answer, simply reply, "That is a great reason but not the one I'm thinking of", until your child has listed four or five positive things about themselves. End the game by giving your child a hug and telling them their last guess was right (or better yet, come up with your own reason)!

Trace your child on a big piece of paper or have your child draw themselves. Then, ask your child to tell you their strengths. Draw or write these on the paper. Examples: "I have strong hands, my feet help me to run, my mouth asks for what it needs, etc." The list will reinforce the positive things about your child and the picture will be a terrific reminder!

Tried and True Fun Speech Games and Activities

"Wow, Nate! You are a super star! Look how fast you learned this new sound. Quick, let's race to the sticker box!"

Nate was a "dream student" to practice with during our sessions. Not only did he enjoy taking speech turns (no matter what activity we did), he attended each session and tried his best.

After one of our usual action-filled sessions, Nate's mom, Karen, spoke up. I was shocked when she said, "Yes, Nate loves coming to see you and learning his speech words with you, but he doesn't practice with any of us at home."

I could hardly believe it. The Nate I knew was so easygoing and eager to please others! I could not figure out why he wouldn't like practicing speech with his parents and babysitter.

After this, I asked Karen to use the following "Tried and True Fun Speech Games and Activities" at home with Nate while having Nate name his sound targets:

- Have Nate "feed" puppets, toys, boxes or containers with a slot or opening. Add growling, munching and lip smacking sound effects while Nate "feeds" something.

- Find cards or pictures that are placed inside colored envelopes or mittens. Hide these envelopes or mittens in an area where Nate can search for them.



- Combine a fun sport game that Nate loves with speech practice, such as a ball or beanbag toss / shoot / roll, etc.
- Engage in sensory play using water, shaving cream, play dough, slime, bubbles or whatever material Nate loves to play in.
- Play a board game with Nate that involves the excitement of pulling a stick to spin toy tops, similar to "Spin to Win" or "Beyblades".
- Give Nate a container filled with rice, dried beans, seeds, confetti, etc. to dig through to find small objects, cards or laminated / sturdy pictures.
- Go on a scavenger hunt with Nate that ends with the reward of Nate getting to find something inside an appealing "treasure box".

At our next session, Karen was just as excited as Nate! She exclaimed, "Nate was laughing and having so much fun during our "games" that he forgot he didn't like practicing his speech at home!" Karen said that Nate liked receiving verbal praise while he practiced, such as: 'You added yoursound!'. She noticed that this praise helped him feel even more successful. Karen also told me that Nate's favorite part was choosing what activity he got to do with his practice partner. In addition, he liked being able to make other choices involving the practice place, time and whether or not to include others.

A child's most supportive resource for improving and carrying over their speech skills are their parents and caregivers.

Your take-away...Add three of these special and fun games or activities to your routine so that speech practice becomes enjoyable quality time spent together with your child.

Keri Vandongen
Speech Language Pathologist,
Big PLANS for Little Kids

Free Education Sessions and MORE!

Did you know that you can attend a variety of FREE education sessions regarding your children, health and more? The Community Education Service (CES) provides parents/caregivers and other community members with opportunities to access free, evidence-informed education sessions and resource materials to address child, youth, and family health and mental health needs.

CES falls under Alberta Health Services' Child and Adolescent Addiction and Mental Health Programs (CAAMHP) and is housed in the Family and Community Resource Centre (FCRC) on the second floor of the Alberta Children's Hospital.

CES education sessions are hosted at the Alberta Children's Hospital and at various venues in Calgary and nearby communities.

Many sessions are also available via telehealth/video-conference technology for those interested participants located within and outside of Calgary, and where telehealth/video-conference facilities are available.

In design and delivery of its education sessions, CES embraces the Family-Centred Care approach to building family and professional capacity by promoting families as active, fully-informed partners in the care of their children. CES also promotes the role of community partners as a vital support to children and families receiving care.

For a complete list of upcoming sessions (including the one listed on the right), visit frc.albertahealthservices.ca/ces.php

Maximize Your Child's Potential: Parent-Child Connections & Healthy Brain Development

Wednesday, April 8, 2015

This presentation is for parents and caregivers of children ages 0-5 years. It is designed to educate participants about infant brain development, and how parents' behaviour could offer good, secure attachment with their child. Participants will also gain a better understanding of what is required to raise children to their fullest potential.

Session Time: 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm / Sign in: 6:15 pm
Location: Alberta Children's Hospital

FREE - Register by visiting <http://frc.albertahealthservices.ca/ces.php>.

For more information please email ces@albertahealthservices.ca or call (403) 955-7420

In the Kitchen With Your Child

This recipe is a great one to share with your child, especially if they like the concept of pizza and enjoy the taste of apples. It also makes a great Sunday brunch! Baking together is a wonderful sensory activity that combines the visuals (sights) with the sounds, smells, tastes and textures (touch) of being in the kitchen. It is also a terrific opportunity to build memories that you and your child will never forget.



Apple Pizza

What You Need:

- 6 slices of bread
- 6 cheese slices or shredded cheese (marble, cheddar or mozzarella)
- 4 of your favorite apples, washed, cut and diced with the skin on.
- Margarine or butter
- A cookie sheet
- A butter knife
- Bacon bits (optional)

What You Do:

1. Lay out the cookie sheet (do not grease).
2. Have your child use a butter knife to put butter or margarine on the slices of bread.
3. Now, she can put the cheese slices or shredded cheese on each piece of bread! If you are choosing to shred the cheese, you may wish to help younger children with this, as little fingers may get too close to the grater.)
4. Have your child sprinkle the chopped apples on the cheese-covered slices.
5. Sprinkle bacon bits over the apples (if you feel like them!)
6. Bake in the oven at 350 degrees for 12-15 minutes, until cheese is melted.
7. Cool for a couple of minutes and it's time to eat! Thank your little chef for a quick, easy meal that's a whole lot healthier than traditional pizza.

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<http://www.education.com/activity/article/apple-pizza-recipe/>

Cineplex Sensory Friendly Screenings

Cineplex Entertainment, in partnership with Autism Speaks Canada, is delighted to present Sensory Friendly Screenings. This program provides a sensory friendly environment for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and their families to view new release films in theatres across the country. Cineplex Odeon Sunridge Spectrum Cinemas will be hosting these screenings in Calgary, AB.

These screenings are presented in a lights up, sound down environment. These screenings will take place approximately every 4-6 weeks on Saturday mornings at 10:30AM. Ticket price is the child admission price for any guests attending these screenings.

Tickets will be available the Tuesday prior to the screening date.



<http://cineplex.com/Theatres/SensoryFriendly>



Cinderella
SATURDAY,
APRIL 4, 2015



Home
SATURDAY,
APRIL 18, 2015

Are you looking for the best places to PLAY in Calgary?



For some inexpensive indoor OR outdoor fun, check out this website: www.calgaryplaygroundreview.com. Not only do they list a variety of playgrounds (indoor and outdoor), splashparks and activities for you to do with your kids, but they have great photos and maps as well!