

# Quality Time is *Playtime*

AS WE WATCH OUR CHILDREN PLAY, WE NATURALLY SMILE, PERHAPS BECAUSE THEY ARE IMITATING SOMEONE YOU KNOW OR ACTING OUT SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED RECENTLY. WHATEVER THE REASON IS, WHEN CHILDREN ARE ENGROSSED IN THEIR PLAY, THEY ARE CONTENT.



**W**hen we say children are only playing, we underestimate what is really happening. When we give our full attention to a work project, we are learning and grasping new knowledge. It is the same for a child as they play – they are developing their interests, exploring, problem-solving and ultimately learning.

As parents, we often put pressure on ourselves to have quality time with our children. However, if we asked our children what they love to do, to play would be a popular response, a concept that has not changed over the course of time. Playtime with your child can be very rewarding. Dedicating a time where you give complete focus to what your child is interested in has many benefits for you as a parent. You will gain an understanding about how your child thinks. This information will provide you with an invaluable tool amidst a brewing temper tantrum.

#### Tips for Playtime

☺ Set aside a 10 minute playtime for you and your child once a day or once a week. Be realistic with what you can do within your work schedule.

☹ Try to use open-ended toys, in other words, use toys that have no right or wrong answer, this allows your child to consider new ideas, create, imagine and it limits frustration. Natural and household items that are safe to play with are always a big hit, for example an old broken telephone or granddads hat can bring a play idea to life. Other examples include blocks, miniature figures, animals, car, dolls, tea set, play dough, drawing, painting and dress up.

☺ Follow your child's lead and interests, don't take over the play and correct mistakes, this can be harder than you think. Listen to your child and let your child assign you a role. This will enable you to get to know more about your child and their understanding of the world.

☹ Have fun! You will be surprised by how relaxed you feel after this special time. Research has shown that play reduces tension and as you watch your child play you will also see them practice and learn new skills, communicate ideas, negotiate and solve problems.

For a parent the biggest reward is to see your child develop in a healthy way and play is formidably the most natural way for a child to actively learn and develop.

For more information and support about childcare, contact Galway City and County Childcare Committee, 091 752039, [mail@galwaychildcare.com](mailto:mail@galwaychildcare.com)

