



HOT TOPIC PLAY

Q Our son is two-and-a-half years old and has been with us for six months. He doesn't appear to know how to engage in play. He is on the go all the time, moves around at speed and picks toys up but quickly drops them, without showing any real interest in them. We have tried sitting on the floor and encouraging him to build with bricks and play with cars but it hasn't worked. He will sit on our laps and listen to a story though, which is good, but doesn't last for long. Is it worth persisting with encouraging him to play and how should we go about it?

A Yes! Please persist with playfulness! Humans are hardwired to play. It is how we learn about the world, ourselves and others, as well as providing us with excellent ways to develop emotional resilience and problem-solving techniques. And this is not only for children – adults need time to play and be creative too. I often think of playing as active meditation: you know, those moments when you really lose yourself and time passes in the blink of an eye... But, of course, it is not always possible to play and this is what you are writing about, here.

I don't know a lot about you and your son's background so I will imagine that he has been in at least two different homes (birth and possibly foster) before your home. I also imagine that he will have experienced at least one difficult separation and have been without a consistent care-giver for his short life. If we think about it logically, he has only been with you (in your safe and loving home) for a quarter of his life, and we don't know the impact of events in the other three quarters of that time. He probably hasn't fully digested the fact that he is now with you forever, and his whirlwind energy may be a reflection of his inner thoughts and feelings. When trying to understand the behaviours our children show us, we need to start with the reasons behind the behaviours. With your son, we can think about the reasons why he is acting this way with two themes: development and emotion.

Developmentally, your son is still very little and he may also have missed some milestones due to his start in life. With this mind, it might be helpful to think about expectations of play and abilities and thinking about your son as slightly younger in age, developmentally. A child who is up to two years old, will start to have a toy preference and begin to play imaginatively with real life situations (tea parties or putting the teddies to bed). He will be more interested in observing others play and probably won't have the means to interact or join in. A child's attention span is usually around two to three times his age, so your son will concentrate for around four minutes on any activity.

When thinking about emotional themes with children and parents, I always like to use Dan Hughes' concept of PACE – *Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy*. Keep playing with your son – let him watch and wander around. If he sees you playing and creating, either with toys or your own crafts, he will become curious and join in eventually. Accept where he is now. He might not always be avoidant in this way, then again, he might always be a ball of energy and you will find a way to connect (probably by running around after him for a while!). There may be a time in the future when some further investigation might be needed but for now, accept his age, his experiences as well as your own thoughts and feelings. Be *curious* about why he is doing this. Asking why and finding age-appropriate ways to ask him will be helpful

for you both in your growing relationship. You can also be curious about your own feelings – is there something being triggered within you? How do you feel about playing and having your son with you? And have *empathy* for him and yourself in this moment. You are trying to connect with your son and you are both carefully building trust and safety together in the early stages of your life together. This is a wonderful thing. Keep going.



More information

Schemas

bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/schemas

PACE Creating Loving Attachments,

by Kim S.Golding and Daniel A. Hughes

Tips

Schemas of Play

Your son will also have a schema for play. Schemas are the themes of toys or activities that children prefer which could be going up and down, spinning, posting things within things, or connecting things. As parents, it can be helpful for us to watch what our children do naturally (without toys) and see which activities they like to do best. Notice the themes of the objects and activities and that will help you plan other activities.

Boundaries

Keep thinking about how much attention your son has and maybe set some short timers for playtime. Start with 30 seconds and over the weeks, increase the time gradually until you get to four minutes. This will help you to see how he is developing and also give him a reliable boundary. Think about how the toys are displayed – are there too few or too many? Are they tidied away quickly, or can your son make some mess? What is the room like where the toys are – too many distractions or inviting and comforting?

Modelling

Your son is at the perfect age to observe and absorb. Let him watch you play or read or create. If you look happy and relaxed, then he will notice that too and come towards you.

Are you happy for your child to receive a large cash inheritance?

If you die without leaving a will, following your death (if you are single or co-habiting) or following the death of you and your spouse, your adopted child will inherit your estate equally with any siblings once they turn 18. At 18 they will become entitled to the whole estate which could be a substantial sum.

Many of our clients tell us that due to the emotional and other challenges their children face, that they do not feel that it is in their child's best interests for them to inherit everything at 18.

We are specialists in advising adoptive parents about the most effective ways of ensuring that their estate passes to their children in the most suitable way for their child and their needs.

We are offering free initial consultations to all adoptive parents to discuss their specific circumstances and requirements.

Call us on 0800 860 6265 and quote 'Adoption UK' to receive your free consultation.



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Call us now:
0330 440 1838
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Chroma continues to offer online therapy services for adoptive families

Music Therapy | Dramatherapy
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We have developed an online therapy service in response to COVID19

We are taking new referrals, so please get in touch



If you or your children need our support contact us on:

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e: referrals@wearechroma.com