

KIDS-PLAY

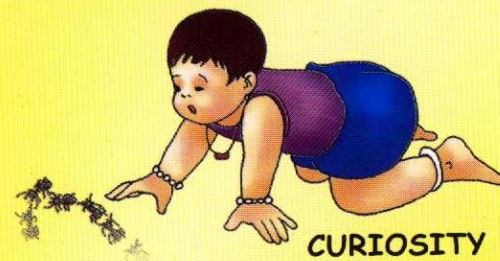
A PATHWAY TO LEARNING



CREATIVE PLAY



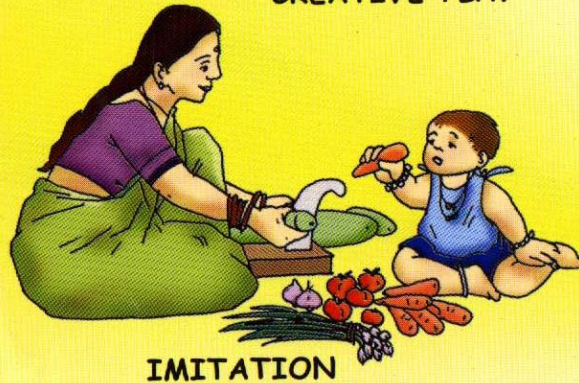
PROBLEM SOLVING



CURIOSITY



PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT



IMITATION



VISION



PARALLEL PLAY



ASSOCIATIVE PLAY



SPEECH



IMAGINATIVE PLAY

HEARING

National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped

(Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India)
Manovikasnagar, Secunderabad - 500 009, Andhra Pradesh, INDIA.



KIDS-PLAY

A PATHWAY TO LEARNING

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PREFACE

Today people have realized the importance of play and its role in the development of children, which was of late neglected in the recent past due to the rapid changes in the family concept, traditions and socio-cultural way of life in the society.

This booklet takes into account crucial aspects related to play and gives parents specific information on how to foster children's play. Underlying all the suggestions in this book is the understanding that **family plays a vital role in children's learning through play.**

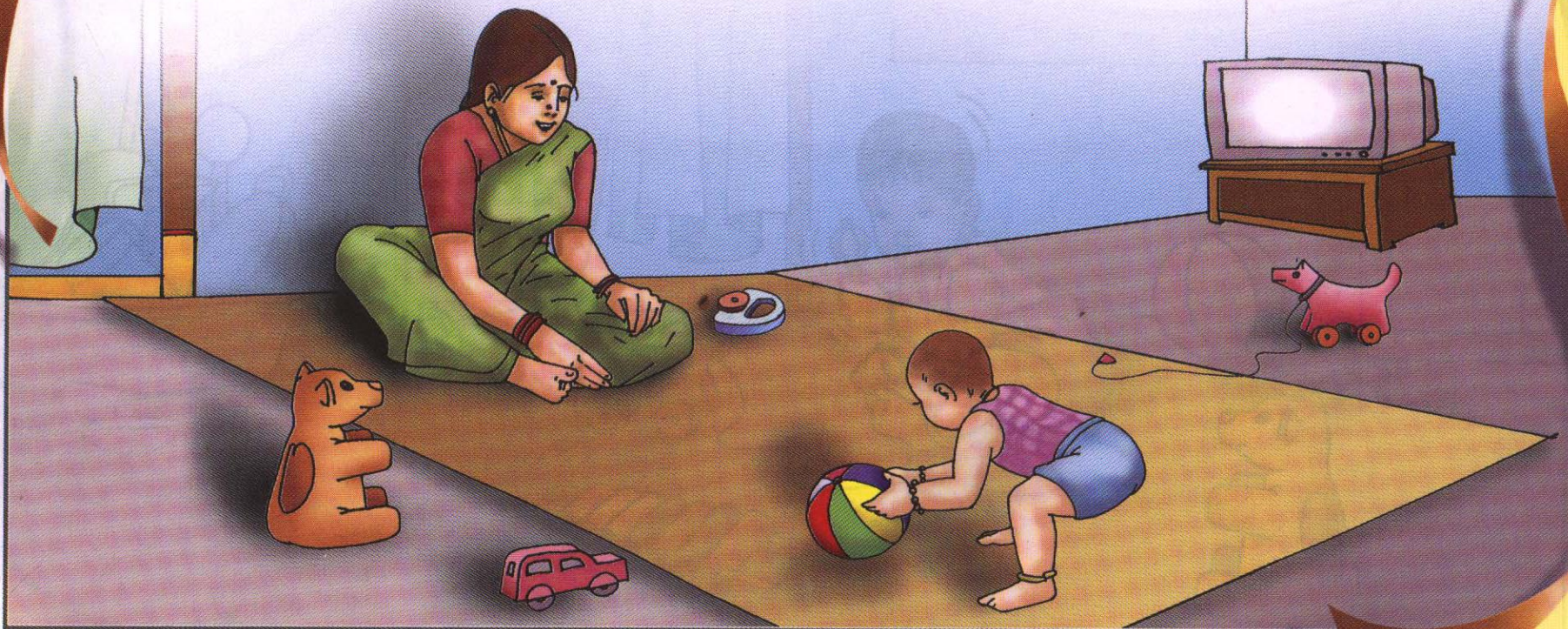
During the first three years of life, **parents** are naturally the most important people in the child's life. Her first environment, the **home and family**, contributes heavily toward the growth of her mind and later development. Through imaginative play with ordinary objects such as buckets, plates, boxes and strings the child learns about being "grown up".



The child distinguishes the **familiar from the new**. She learns about **space** i.e. where things are, in relationship to self and to other things.

It is often observed that many families overlook how **meaningful work** can also nurture development. Young children flourish when allowed to enter the world of real work that surrounds them, from picking up toys, to assisting the mother in household chores. If children are shielded from a whole category of activities simply because it is called "work" and not "play", their developmental opportunities may be restricted. Many parents are unaware of **enriching** their children's environment in a meaningful way. This booklet attempts to tell parents and care givers, the kind of things that can be done in play that teach children skills and at the same time help them develop to their **maximum potential**.

Children at every stage in development need to **participate** in play. Play is not merely an activity but serious business for the child. Its importance lies in the fact that children through the medium of play learn many **concepts** which are critical for development. During play, the



child combines **bits of skills into new wholes** and finds out what works and how it works. By this they not only amuse themselves but also develops independence and ability to **cope with problems**.

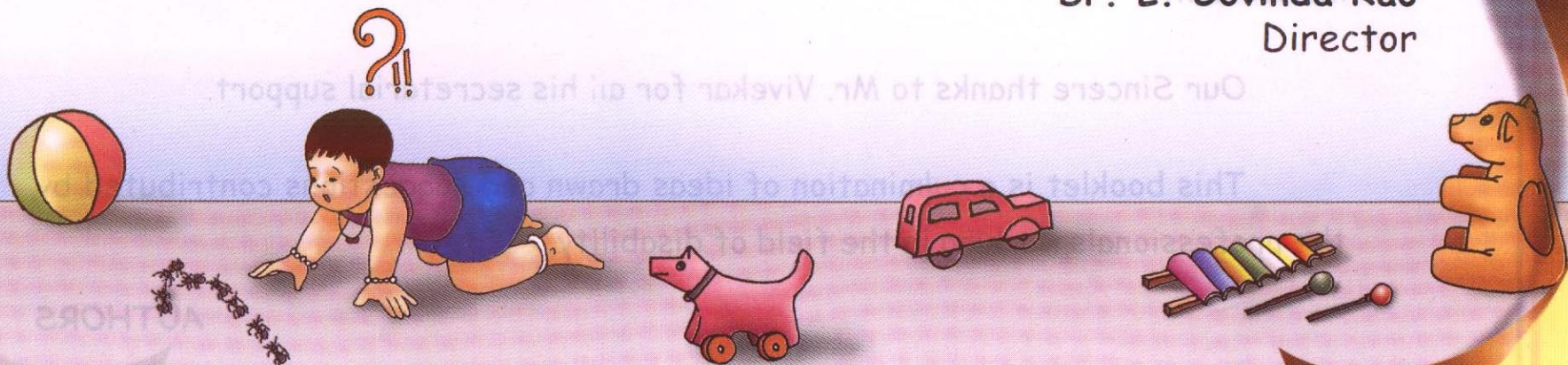
Children use almost any opportunity anywhere to play by themselves, or with adults, or with other children. The countless hours they spend banging spoons repeatedly on pots and pans, running their hands through water, scribbling on paper and on forbidden walls, exercising their **endless resourceful minds and bodies**, are all a part of their play.

Play is every child's **medium of learning**. For children with normal development, **play comes naturally** and therefore they reach their developmental potentials easily. This is not so for children with delayed development. For children with developmental delays, play experience has to be provided considering their limitations. Therefore, this booklet is a modest attempt to help parents and professionals dealing with very young children both normal and with developmental delays, to provide play experiences which inturn enhance learning and development.

Research evidence indicates that **human beings have prolonged** infancy to allow lots of time to play so that they may develop their sophisticated skills. It is likely that play fosters **curiosity and exploration**. Therefore, this crucial aspect called **play** warrants extra attention.

I hope, this book will be useful to all those who have concern for child development. We will be happy to receive feedback for improvement in our future publication.

Dr. L. Govinda Rao
Director



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our foremost thanks are due to the children who challenged our abilities and ignited our minds to formulate a book for them.

A special note of gratitude to Dr. L. Govinda Rao, our Director, NIMH not only for facilitating and providing the needed infrastructure in making this booklet a possibility but also for his support, encouragement and guidance through the entire process of our work.

We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to all our colleagues who have contributed by devoting their time and expertise in refining the content which has helped in shaping up this publication.

We thank the artist, Mr. M. Satyanarayana for his commendable artwork and involvement.

Our Sincere thanks to Mr. Vivekar for all his secretarial support.

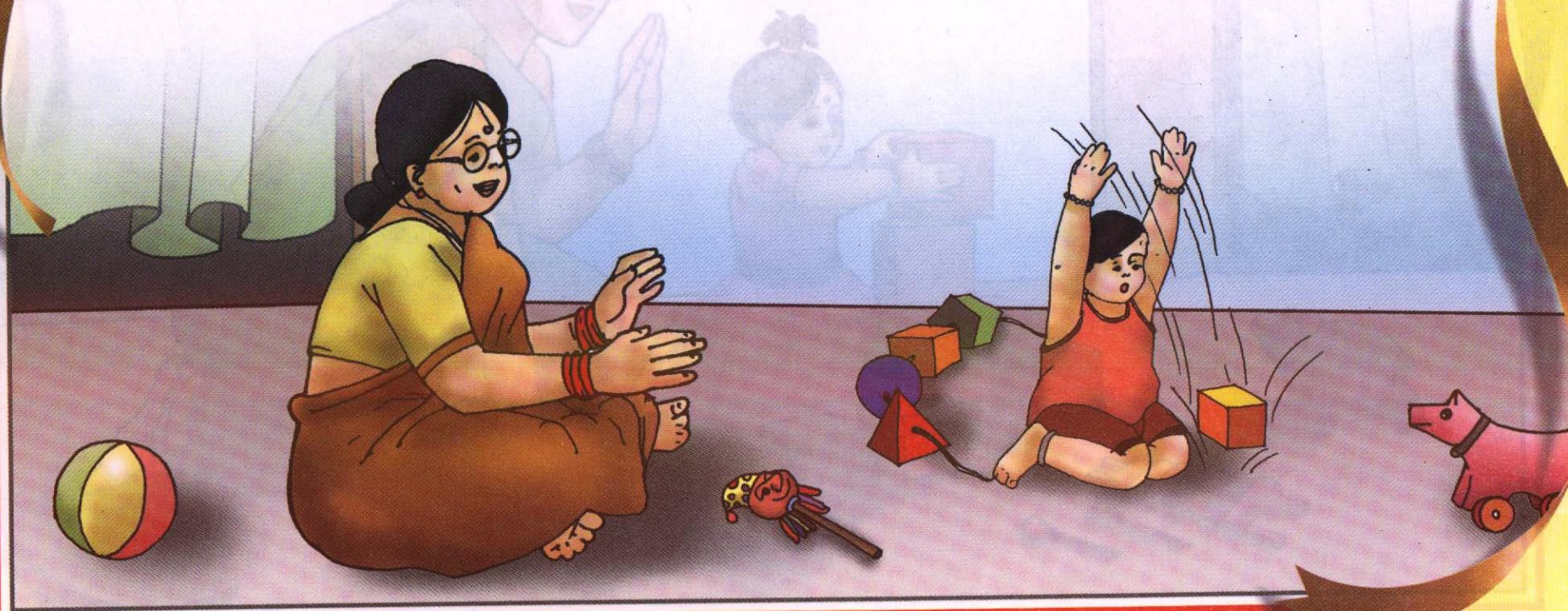
This booklet is a culmination of ideas drawn and suggestions contributed by the professionals working in the field of disability.

AUTHORS

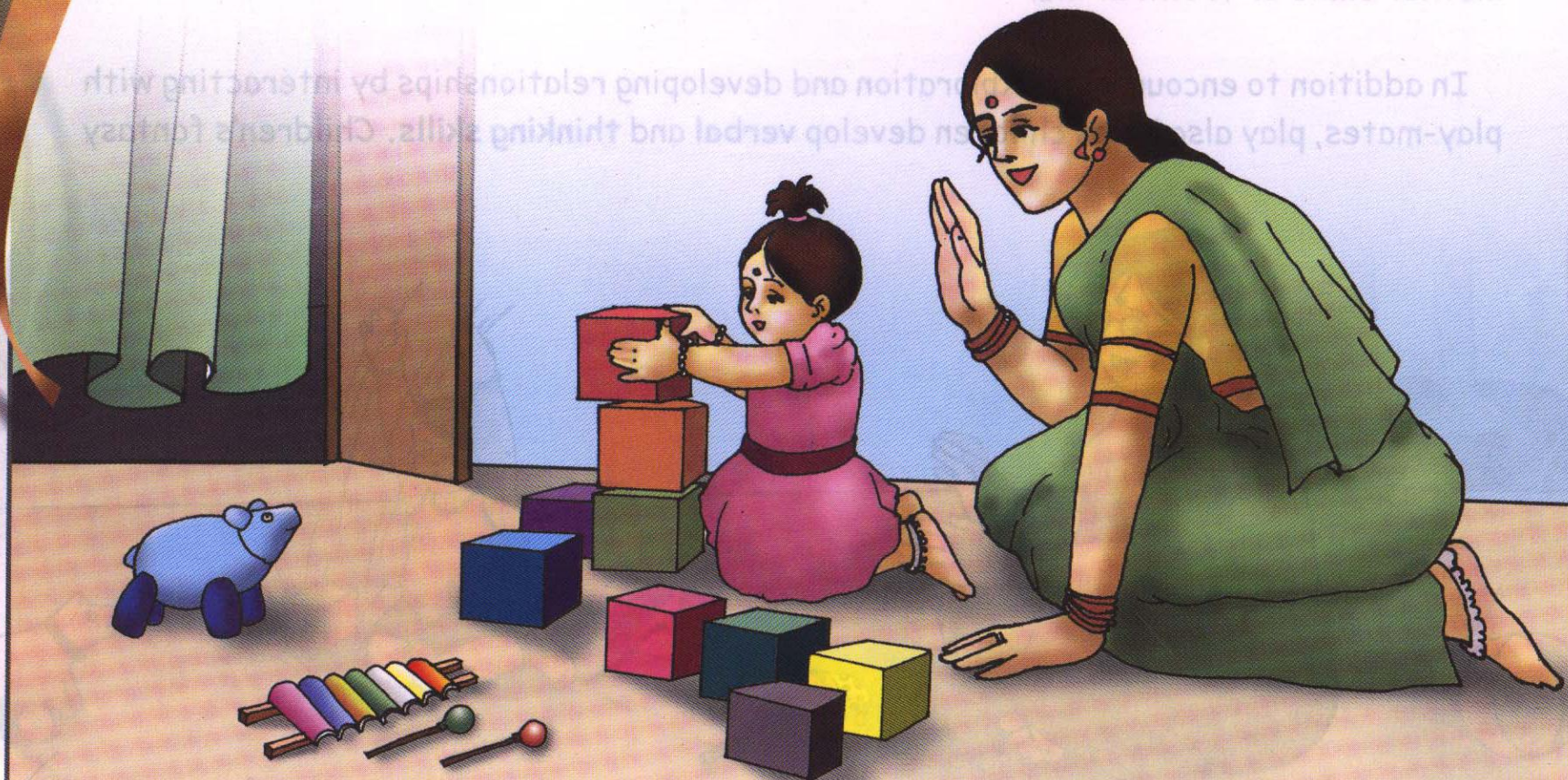
INTRODUCTION

Play is the primary way through which children learn. Through play, children **explore** their **bodies**, their **relationships** with their parents and peers, and the **world around** them. A child who repeatedly drops a wooden block from her hand is not only playing, but is also experimenting, and trying to understand the type of sound it produces when the block hits the floor. The child learns through reasoning. What would happen to the fallen block? Does it vanish or does it remain there? Will my mother pick up the block? Will my mother smile or frown at me?

In addition to encouraging exploration and developing relationships by interacting with play-mates, play also helps children develop **verbal** and **thinking skills**. Children's fantasy

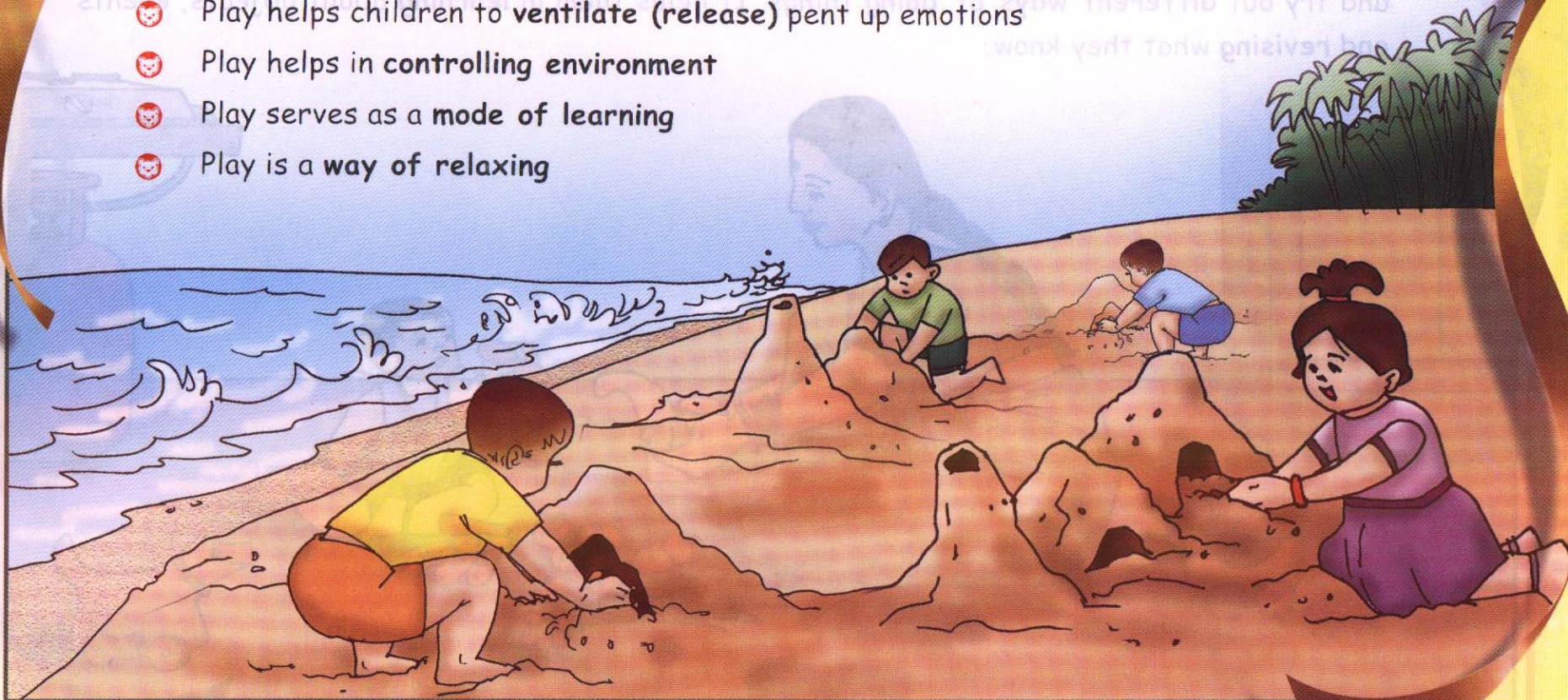


games help them explore new situations, and **model** roles they have observed, for example, caring for a baby doll as if it were a child. If parents take an active part in their child's play, they build the child's **self-esteem**. When parents respond to a baby's cooing, the baby learns what she has to offer is interesting and entertaining to the larger world. Thus, positive response from care givers will foster higher self esteem in children. An understanding of play in normal children will help in understanding play in children who are not developing as expected due to some problem either in the physical, visual, auditory or cognitive area.



PLAY

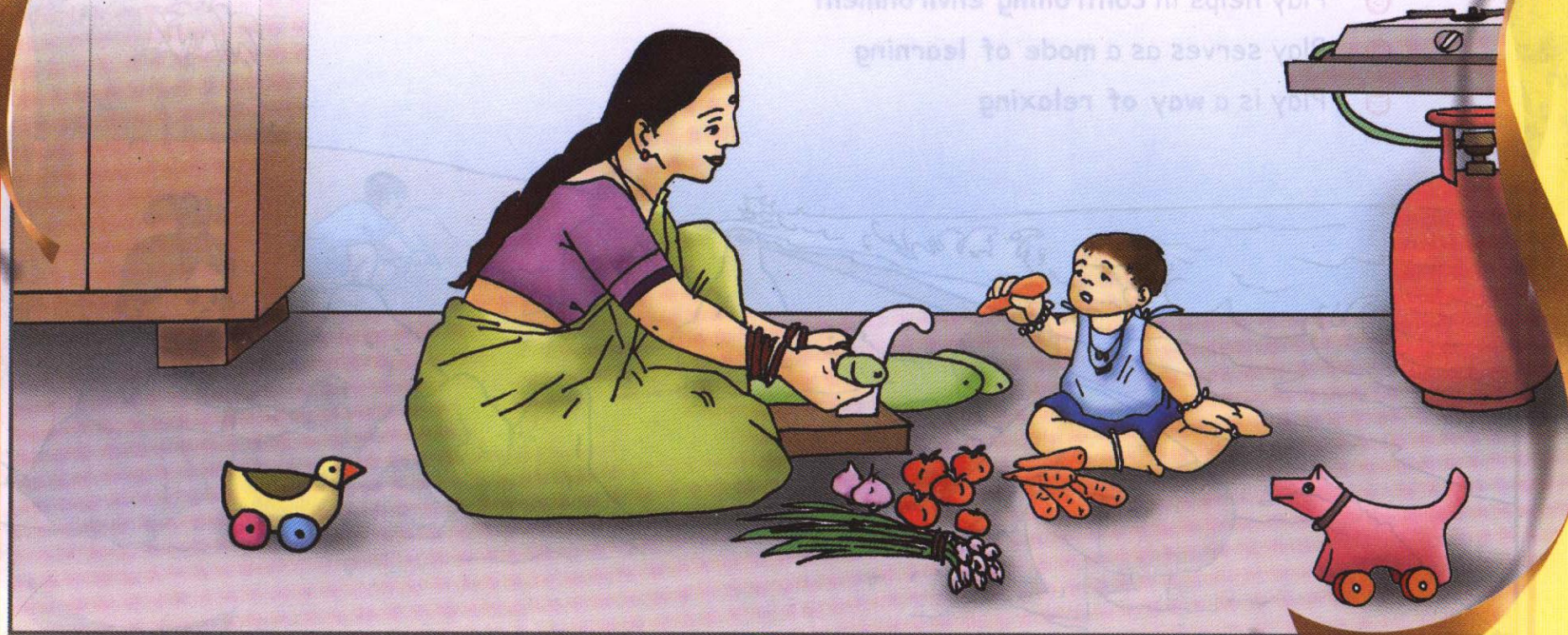
- ❶ Play is a **natural activity** of children
- ❷ Play is an instinctive behaviour which allows children to **practice for future adultlike behaviours**
- ❸ Play is a **multisensory experience** involving sensations such as seeing, hearing and touching as well as carrying out complicated activities or movements.
- ❹ Play is children's natural medium of **self expression**.
- ❺ Play helps in **building relations**
- ❻ Play helps children to **ventilate (release)** pent up emotions
- ❼ Play helps in **controlling environment**
- ❽ Play serves as a **mode of learning**
- ❾ Play is a **way of relaxing**



PLAY HELPS IN LEARNING

Infants need extremely close, almost constant supervision. Apart from this, when children and parents are involved in household chores, children make a meaningful contribution to the family and they gain a sense of purpose and come to feel as being more a part of the family. Children are engaged in the vigorous process of **self-discovery**, and are **acquainting themselves with their new world** by seeing, listening, chewing, smelling and grasping etc.

Most of their **learning** comes through play. Play is not just having fun. Children's play represents what is going on in **their minds**. They use play to **re-enact** pleasant and unpleasant experiences and try out **different ways of doing things**. It helps them in **learning** about objects, events and **revising** what they know.



Infants learn relatively more quickly during the first year than at any other period of their lives. Every play activity however simple, forms a link in the complex chain of development. Whether it is a noisy toy for listening skills, a fuzzy one for tactile sense (sensation of touch) or a moving toy for vision, toys are children's essential tools for learning. Play which involves cuddling, tickling, bouncing on a lap also helps children to learn about themselves and other people.



IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

- ❶ Play helps in **physical development** - All parts of the body are exercised and energy is spent by active play.
- ❷ Play helps children to learn **language** and to **speak**.
- ❸ Play helps in learning and development of **intelligence** in children.
- ❹ Play improves children's ability to **socialize**.
- ❺ Play helps children develop **emotionally**. It provides an **outlet for pent up emotional energy**.
- ❻ Play serves as a means to **alleviate fear** and get acquainted with the world around.

Play helps in children's all round development.



TYPES OF PLAY

🧒 Exploratory Play

🧒 Manipulative Play

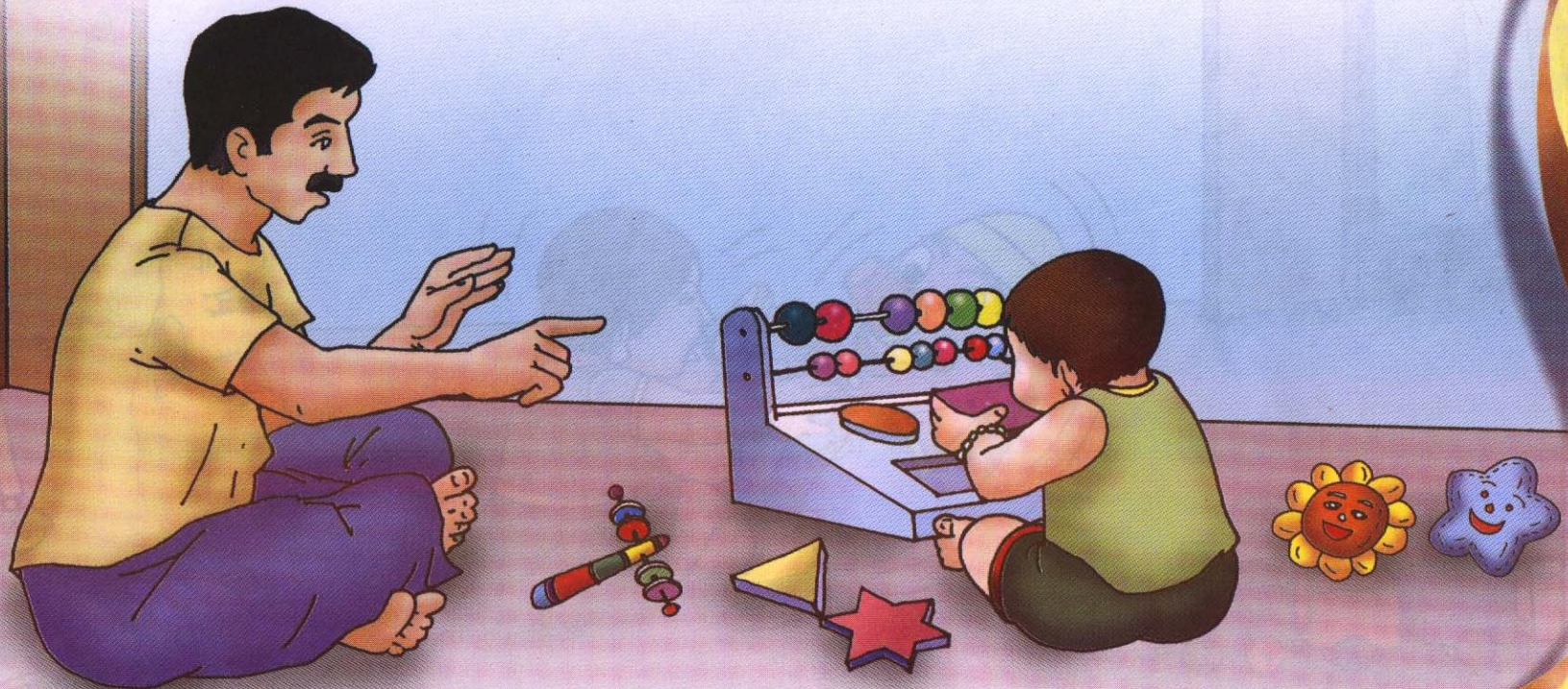
🧒 Combinatorial Play

🧒 Symbolic Play

🧒 Pretend Play

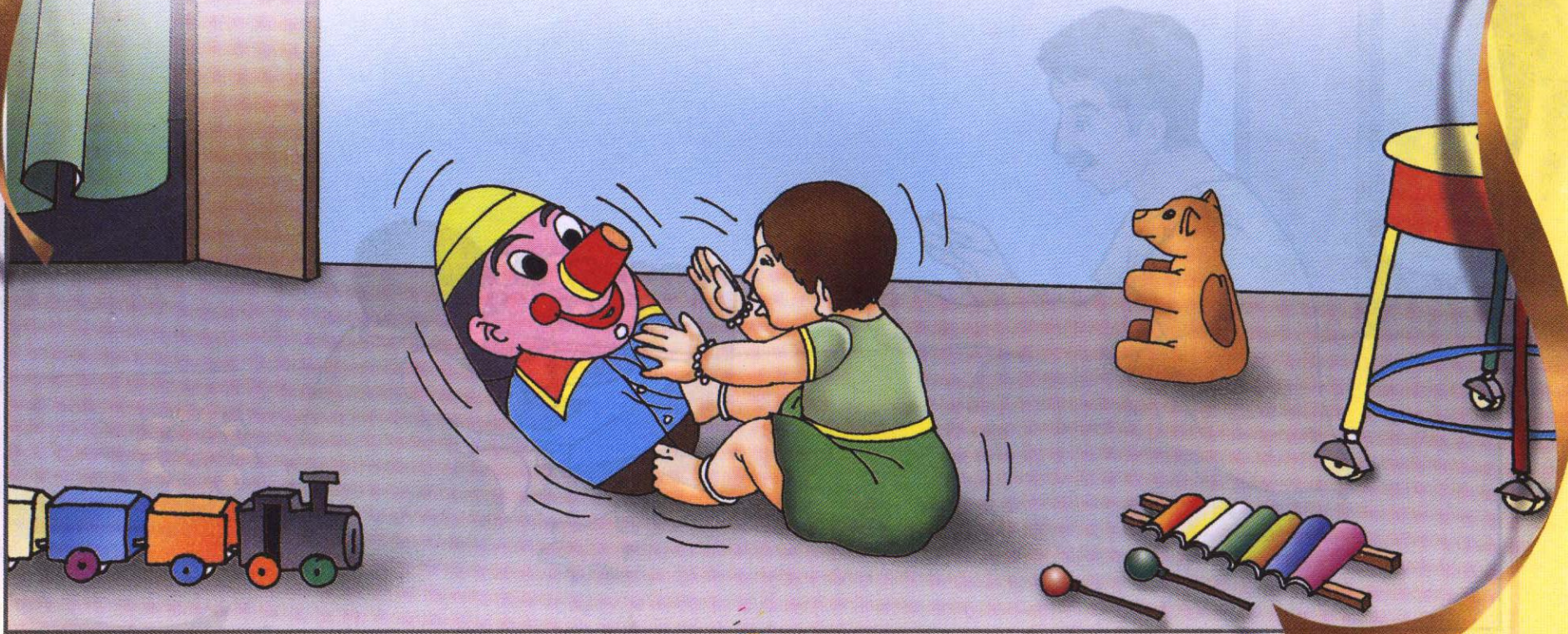
🧒 Constructive Play

As children develop, the way in which they use materials changes from exploratory to manipulative, functional to constructive, then to dramatic, and finally to learning games with rules.



In **Exploratory play** children learn about the qualities of objects by mouthing, touching and feeling them. Through exploratory play, children learn that some objects are soft, while others are not. Similarly, some things can be picked up while others cannot.

In **Manipulative play** children enjoy using all sorts of manipulative toys such as building blocks or pieces of cardboard to construct towers. Children are instinctively creative builders. Providing children with the opportunity to play with manipulative toys in a safe and stimulating environment is crucial for their healthy development. During these activities, **fine motor development** occurs by the controlled use of hand and finger muscles which in turn develops **eye-hand coordination**. As children experiment with building blocks, they learn about important concepts such as gravity and stability.

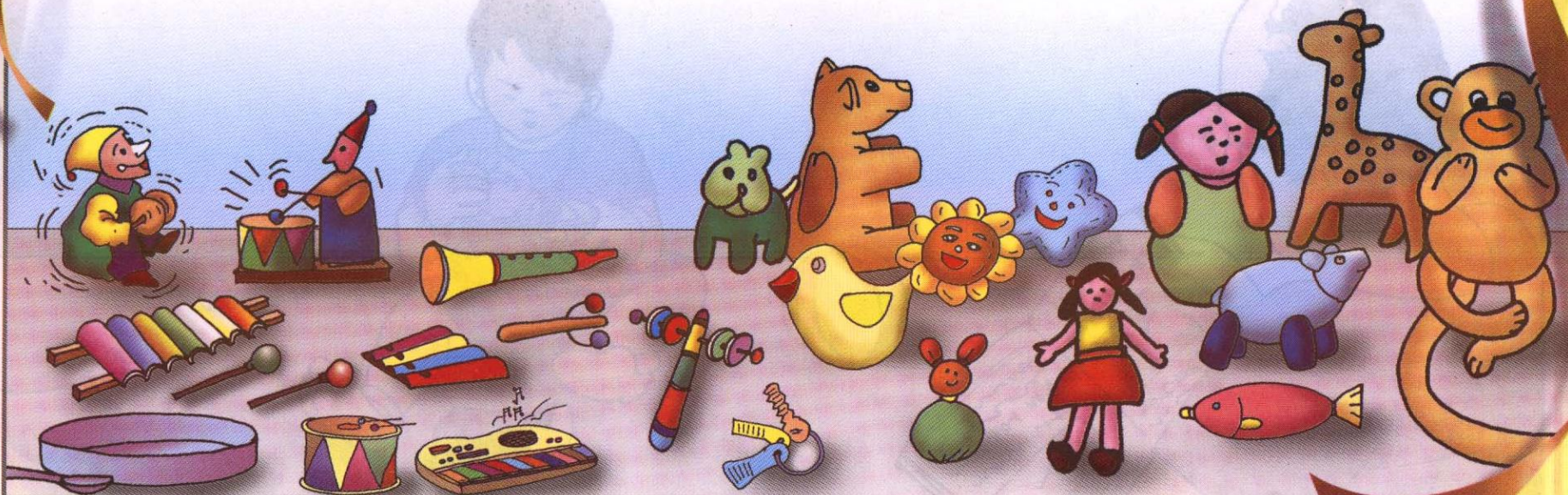


In **Combinatorial Play**, children relate objects to each other such as putting a brick on a truck. Children pretend to treat toys as though they have life, for example feeding the doll as if it were a baby.

In **Symbolic Play** children use one object to symbolize another, such as a large bead to symbolize a toffee.

In **Pretend Play**, children pretend as if objects have life and dramatize with them eg. feeding a baby doll.

In **Constructive Play** children use materials to make things not for utility purposes but rather for the enjoyment they derive from making them eg. mud cakes.

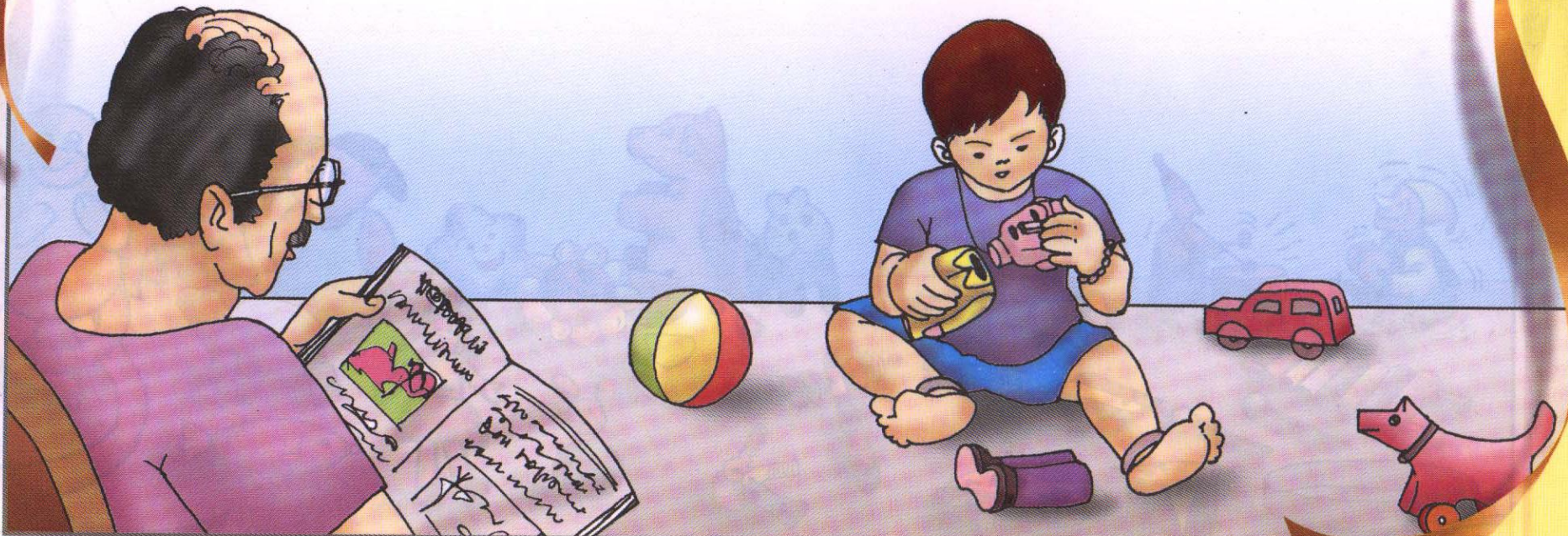


PLAY EXPERIENCES OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS

Young children have an extremely **short attention span**. Therefore simple, repetitive play and sensitive, appropriate responses from parents are best as they help improve the length and quality of attention. Infants need some **control over the new environment**. Play experiences encourage children to make things happen. This will lead to a **solid base of confidence and trust**. The child **learns what to expect** when she drops a ball or squeezes a squeaky toy. The child **also delights** in causing parents to do something repeatedly, like picking up a toy each time it is dropped.

Once children cross the age of one, they begin to **explore** everything around them. They **investigate** everything with **curiosity** and continually experiment to discover how a toy is made and what happens when thrown.

Although children require extremely close **supervision**, they also need some **freedom to play alone joyfully**.



FAMILY AND CHILD'S PLAY

Most of the toddler's playmates are their family members. Children enjoy playing alongside caretakers/adults and imitating some of their activities like cooking or gardening. Members of the family constitute the children's first environment and are the most significant people during the early, formative years.



Younger children most often engage in **solitary play**. Older children may prefer to play alone for **brief periods of time** to develop their own thinking and ideas.

Parallel play involves children playing beside each other, but not with one another.

Associative play involves common materials being shared among children.



ASSOCIATIVE/GROUP PLAY



PARALLEL PLAY



SOLITARY PLAY

SOLITARY PLAY

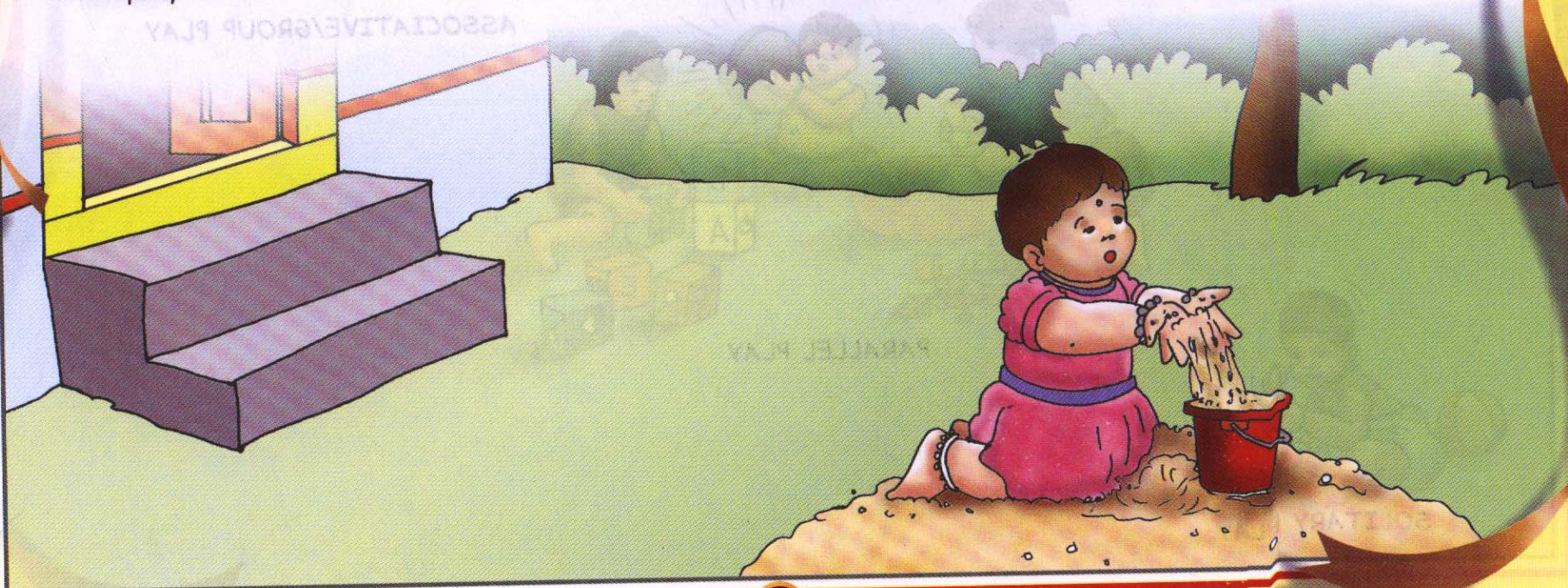
Solitary play refers to the type of play, young children engage in at **first**. This is the **least mature** form of play. As the name denotes, in this stage of play children **play by themselves**.

ACTIVITIES DURING SOLITARY PLAY

- ❶ Makes simple, often repetitive movements, sometimes with an object and sometimes without.
- ❷ Picks up objects, puts them down, pounds them or fills and dumps containers.

Whatever is the case, we need to provide a wide range of learning materials to encourage children to get involved with these materials on their own. In addition to providing toys, it is necessary to give children time to play with these toys.

The next stage through which children pass in the course of their development is, parallel play.



PARALLEL PLAY

Parallel play is a fascinating phenomenon. **Parallel play** often involves two children who seem to be playing together. By **age two**, children reach the stage of parallel play. As one gets close enough to witness what is going on, one will find that each child is actually playing a different game. The children will seem to be talking to themselves rather than each other.

ACTIVITIES DURING PARALLEL PLAY

- Initially **plays near** other children and merely manipulate objects or materials.
- Later, **plays beside** other children, using the same materials but **playing different games**.
- Finally participates in **dramatic or imaginative play** with more than one child, but each child plays her own independent game
- From parallel play the child steps into a more mature type of play called the group / associative play.



ASSOCIATIVE PLAY

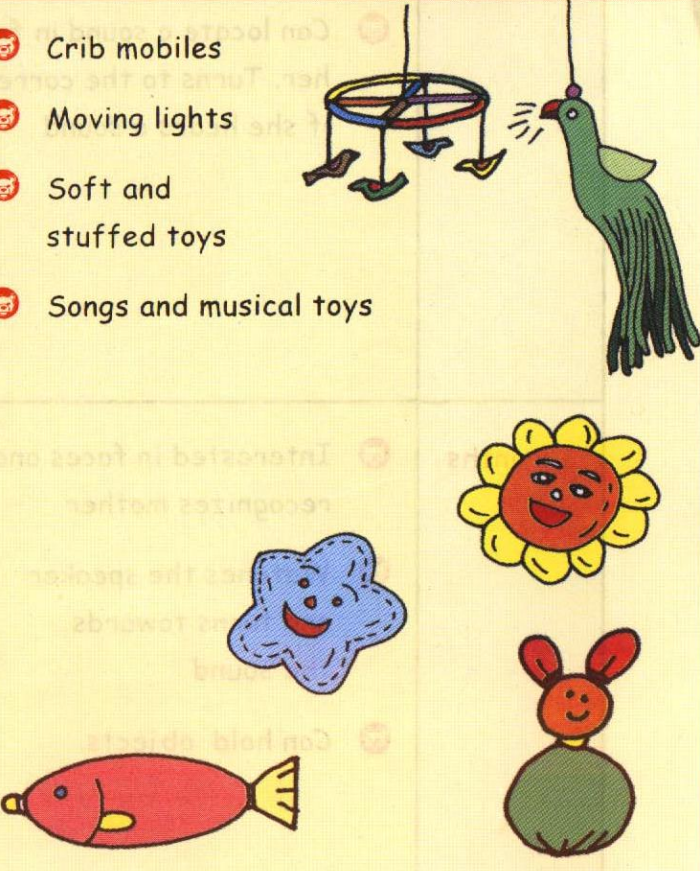
Associative/Group play involves a group of children coming together to construct, create something or take up spontaneous roles in imaginary play as that of a doctor/teacher. It is essential that children pass through these stages of play as they progress in age. Associative play not only helps children **socialize** (mingle) with others, but it is also responsible for the development of children in other areas such as **intelligence, emotions, language etc.**


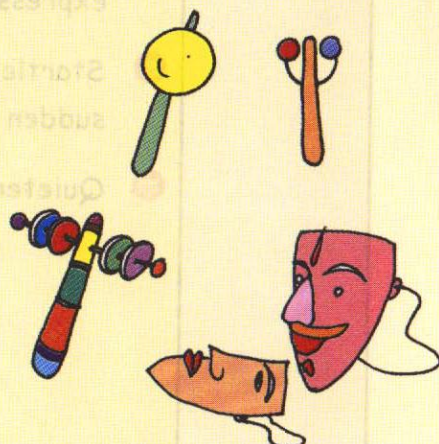
Activities during associative/group play

- ❶ Children play, group games by being together and **sharing** with other children.
- ❷ Fantasy and symbolic play.
- ❸ Creative play.



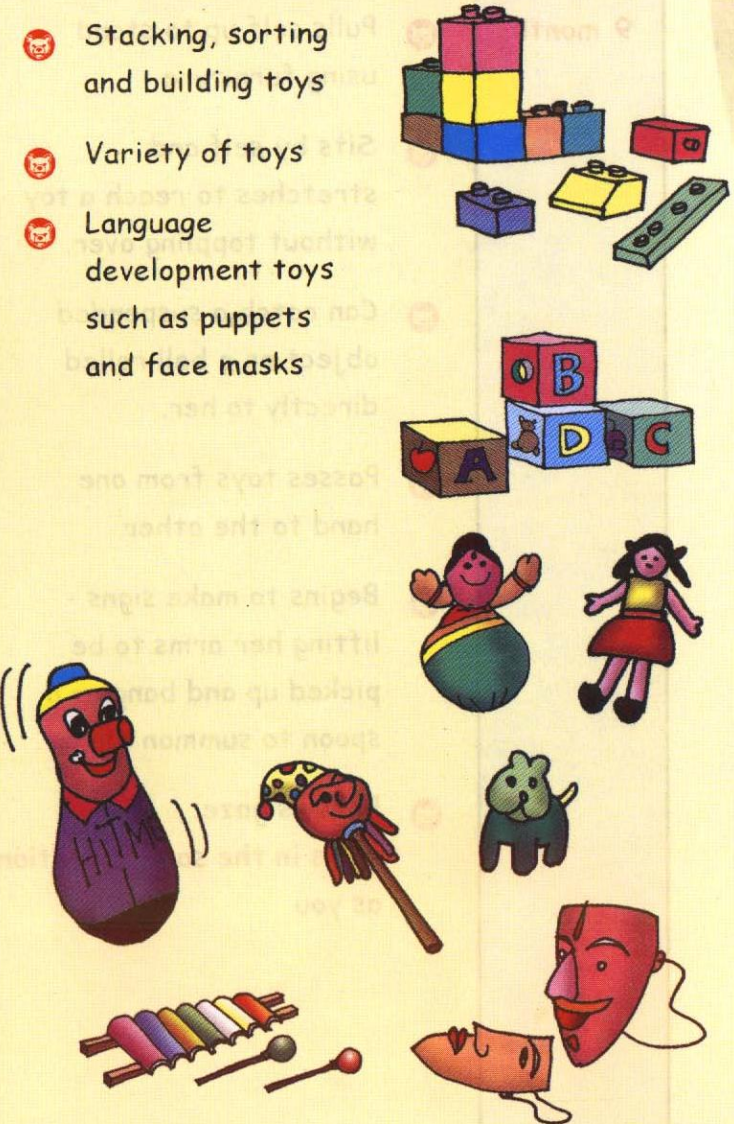
A SIMPLE CHART TO MATCH CHILD'S AGE WITH PLAY












Age (in months)	Activities	Play Material
1 month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focusses on objects 8-10 inches away ● Follows an object slowly with eyes ● Watches intently when someone talks to her and may imitate their facial expressions ● Startled by loud/ sudden noises ● Quietens by low pitched sounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Crib mobiles ● Moving lights ● Soft and stuffed toys ● Songs and musical toys 

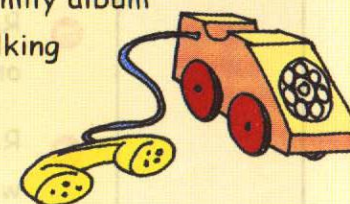
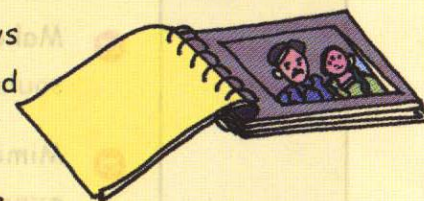
Age (in months)	Activities	Play Material
2 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kicks and waves arms when excited Smiles directly at people Can locate a sound in front of her. Turns to the correct side if she hears a sound 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flashing lights Toys that encourage physical activity such as kicking Toys with high contrast geometric designs Songs and musical toys 
3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interested in faces and recognizes mother Watches the speaker and turns towards the sound Can hold objects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rattles Toys with rings Mirrors Squeezy toys Musical toys Face masks 

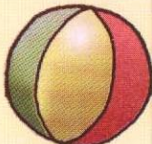

Age (in months)	Activities	Play Material
4 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ Squirms with excitement, squeals and laughs ❷ Watches own hands ❸ Clasps objects that are offered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ Toys with a variety of sounds, bright colors and lights ❷ Face masks ❸ Rattles ❹ Teethers ❺ Cloth books ❻ Stuffed toys ❼ Noise making toys 
5 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ Uses mouth to explore objects. ❷ If offered toys, she will look back and forth. ❸ Smiles at other babies, especially the one in the mirror 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ Hit-me toys ❷ Hand held musical toys ❸ Squeezy toys ❹ Measuring spoons ❺ Mirrors 

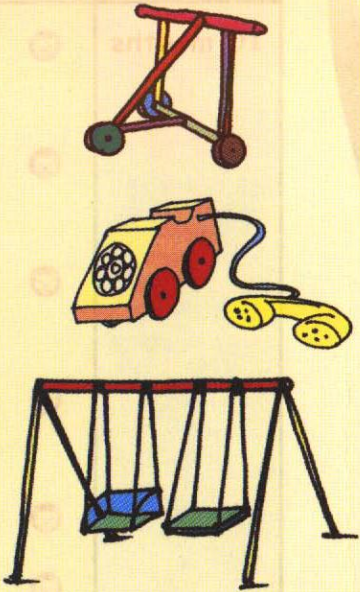
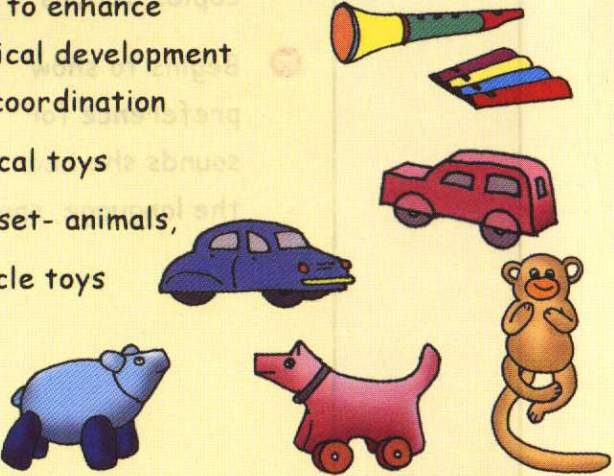
Age (in months)	Activities	Play Material
6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bangs rattle and shouts at the same time Begins to look for things she dropped. Babbling begins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toys to encourage crawling Action/reaction toys Stacking toys Push-pull toys Textured ball Songs and music Measuring spoons 
7 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prefers to look at complex objects. Recognizes voices, and responds her to name. Grasps by cupping her entire hand around an object. Uses eyes to help her reach out to touch, adjusting the position of her hand under visual control. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shape sorters Sound making toys Stacking, nesting and building toys Containers with items to fill and empty 

Age (in months)	Activities	Play Material
8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can sit unsupported Picks up small objects with thumb and finger Concentrates on one toy at a time Understands nesting of objects Makes two-syllabled sounds Mimics facial expressions Responds to ones own name Raises arms to signal wanting to be picked up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stacking, sorting and building toys Variety of toys Language development toys such as puppets and face masks 

Age (in months)	Activities	Play Material
9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Pulls self up to stand using furniture  Sits by self and stretches to reach a toy without toppling over.  Can catch a suspended object or a ball rolled directly to her.  Passes toys from one hand to the other  Begins to make signs - lifting her arms to be picked up and banging a spoon to summon dinner.  Follows gaze; looks in the same direction as you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Stacking, sorting and building toys  Toys to encourage physical development such as crawling and walking  Toys with buttons, Language development toys such as dolls, and puppets  Books with large pictures such as family album for pointing and talking  Toys which encourage role play such as play telephone



Age (in months)	Activities	Play Material
10 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can walk if both hands are held Looks for things that she drops Can anticipate a surprise event in a song Pokes, prods and explores with hands Loves to play peek-a-boo Imitates, watches and copies actions Begins to show preference for sounds she hears in the language, spoken. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toys to encourage physical development such as crawling and walking Toys to encourage learning moulds, pictures or animals Large balls with ridges for grasping Early role play toys, such as pretend toys Large plastic beads     

Age (in months)	Activities	Play Material
11 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cruises along furniture, standing up with one hand support • Knows that smaller objects fit in larger ones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toys to encourage physical development • Toys which facilitate linking • Stacking toys that encourage eye- hand coordination • Outdoor toys and swings • Push and pull toys • Toy telephone, soft animals or balls of varied textures 
12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likes other children but doesn't play with them • Imitates actions such as talking on phone, sweeping, mopping, cleaning etc. • Uses one object to reach for another. • Displays affection through hugs, kisses, pats and smiles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toys to enhance physical development and coordination • Musical toys • Play set- animals, • Vehicle toys 

Age (in months)	Activities	Play Material
12-18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More purposeful in the way he explores objects Treats objects in appropriate ways eg. Cuddles teddy bears First words generally relate to objects, cats, dogs and buses etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Push and pull toys Construction play sets Eg: Building blocks, Play sets Stuffed animals Musical instruments Puzzles with knobs and a few large pieces 
18-24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child is very mobile- can walk and run Can pull a toy with a string Can use feet to scoot along on a cycle Can put any shape in the sorter. Can put one block on top of another Scribbles Plays with clay/dough Follows simple directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toys that help refine eye hand coordination eg. large beads for stringing Car, trucks, trains etc. Toy house keeping tools Dolls and doll accessories (comb, dress etc) Books with different textures (soft cloth, jute, rexine etc.) Large crayons Play dough Child size chairs and tables 

Age (in months)	Activities	Play Material
24-30 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🐱 Jumps, and walks up and down stairs with one foot at a time 🐱 Likes to plays with other children 🐱 Has good eye - hand coordination and can build a tower of 6-8 blocks. 🐱 Understands meanings of certain terms such as inside and outside 🐱 Can put away ones toys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🐱 Toy vehicles 🐱 Role play toys 🐱 Sports toys-bat and ball 🐱 Stuffed animals 🐱 Building blocks, Books 🐱 Crayons 🐱 Simple puzzles 🐱 Water play toys 🐱 Basic counting and number toys 

Age (in months)	Activities	Play Material
30-36 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Runs Scribbles Expects praise and appreciation Can fit simple puzzles by self Enjoys new materials and methods: working with clay, using paint, and brushes Can identify as boy or girl. eg. : girls likes to imitate mother 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climbing games- ladder steps Slides Picture books Planks /seasaw Sea Horses Barrels Musical games- running according to music Simple puzzles Play dough Non toxic paints Brushes 

Children's play activities differ according to their age;
Play activities of infants differ from those of toddlers.

ACTIVITIES TO FOSTER PLAY IN INFANTS AND TODDLERS

To set child's mood for play :

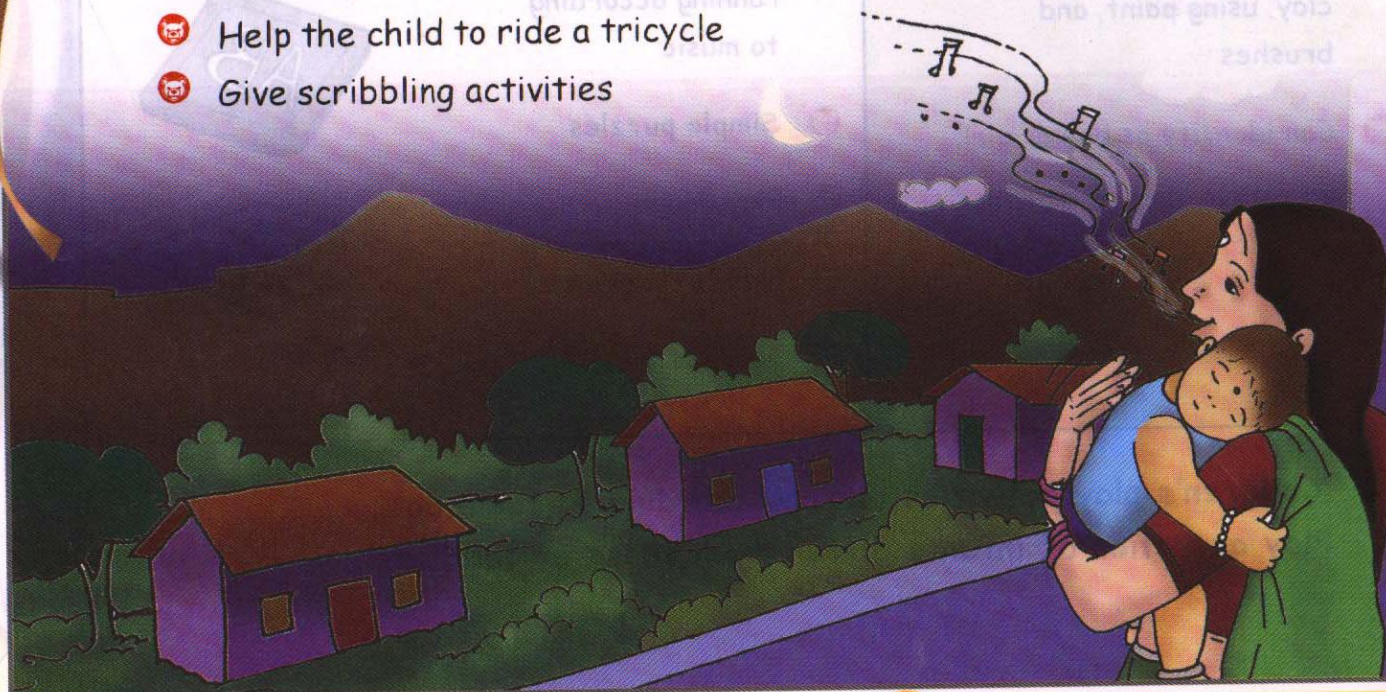
- Keep the child in a relaxed manner
- Sing to the child Eg. Lullabies
- Rock the infant

To foster physical development :

- Encourage age appropriate physical activities
- Provide lot of toys which involve use of hands and legs
- Play action games with the child
- Encourage the child to jump
- Help the child to ride a tricycle
- Give scribbling activities

To foster speech and language development :

- Talk to the child
- Speak clearly to the infant
- Call the infant by name
- Show objects and pictures
- Narrate activities to the child
- Allow the child to recite rhymes
- Read stories the child



To foster cognitive development :

- 🐱 Provide opportunities to play with toys, objects, people around him.
- 🐱 Provide explorative and manipulative toys and objects. eg. puzzles, nesting toys, pull-push toys.
- 🐱 Teach the child different concepts eg. Shape, size, colour.

To foster social development :

- 🐱 Interact with the child.
- 🐱 Take the child to different places.
- 🐱 Motivate the child to mingle with others.
- 🐱 Teach appropriate gestures.
- 🐱 Help the child to follow simple commands.

A stimulating environment is also necessary to provide opportunities for play.

Provide a stimulating environment :

- 🐱 Create opportunities for play
- 🐱 Encourage the child to initiate play activities
- 🐱 Bring variety in activities
- 🐱 Praise the child for successful attempts in play so that it gets reinforced
- 🐱 Make the environment safe

Though infants and toddlers play with some common materials, the manner in which they play would vary from infancy to toddler hood and to childhood.



TOYS FOR INFANTS

Playtime is the most enjoyable time in a child's life. Toys have a big role in play activities and they are not just playthings. They fulfill many functions. There is a large number of toys meant for different purposes. They help to create for the child a small world of her own, reflecting the larger world outside, with its variety of individuals, occupations, and activities in which the elders are engaged in their daily life. Therefore, choosing the right kind of toy is important for children's development.

To encourage the play activities of children, it is imperative to choose play material, which is appropriate to her age and development.

Toys suggested for infants (0-1 years)

- 🐱 Dangling toys
- 🐱 Brightly coloured mobiles
- 🐱 Colourful wall posters
- 🐱 Unbreakable Mirrors
- 🐱 Crib toys
- 🐱 Bells
- 🐱 Rattles
- 🐱 Large plastic rings
- 🐱 Stuffed animals
- 🐱 Swings
- 🐱 Cups and spoons
- 🐱 Teething toys
- 🐱 Pull and push toys
- 🐱 Soft toys
- 🐱 Colourful balls
- 🐱 Light plastic blocks
- 🐱 Cloth cubes
- 🐱 Musical toys
- 🐱 Squeaky toys
- 🐱 Coloured picture books
- 🐱 Different textured toys



TOYS FOR TODDLERS

- ❶ Rings
- ❷ Large nesting blocks
- ❸ Cuddly animals
- ❹ Large, soft balls
- ❺ Washable, unbreakable dolls
- ❻ Push-pull toys with rounded handles
- ❼ Simple musical instruments
- ❽ Unbreakable toys
- ❾ Sand box and toys
- ❿ Water toys
- ⓫ Glove puppets
- ⓬ Simple 2/3 piece puzzles
- ⓭ Objects to imitate eg. Miniature kitchen set, toy telephone etc.
- ⓮ Colourful picture books.
- ⓯ Non toxic toys

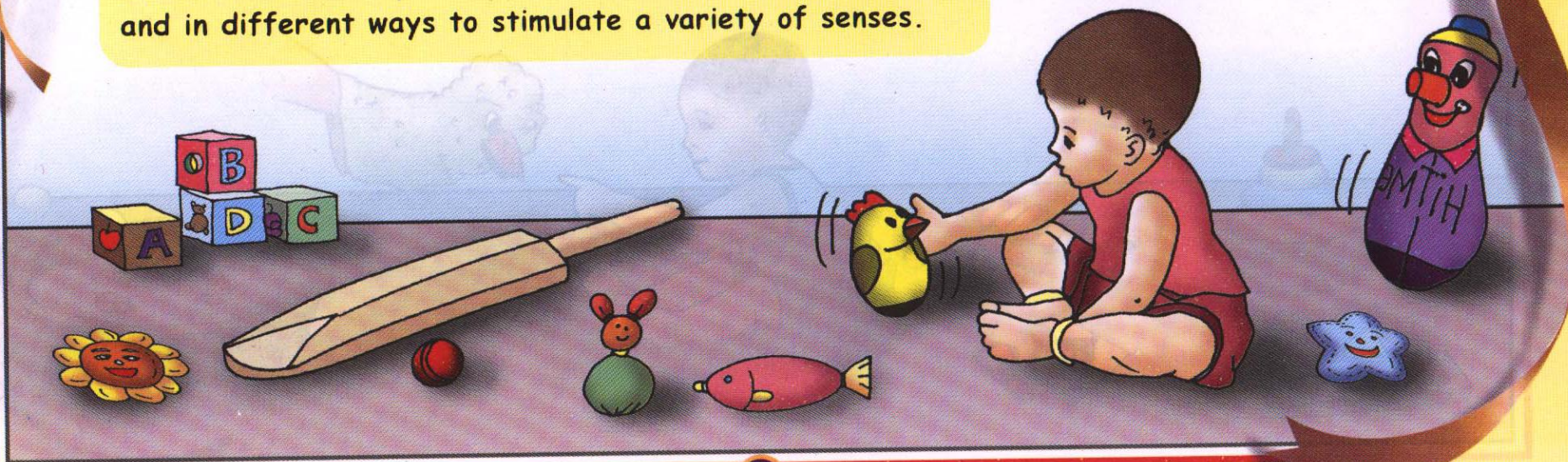


CHOOSE THE RIGHT KIND OF TOYS FOR CHILDREN

- ☛ Toys given to children should be appropriate to their age.
- ☛ They should neither frustrate nor bore the child (Toys too complex or too simple, monotonous or inappropriate to age.)
- ☛ Simple toys are the best. They allow creativity and develop imagination.
- ☛ Toys should be colourful and attractive as they increase attention and interest.

It is advisable to choose inexpensive, low cost and meaningful toys. Such toys will help the parents in providing a variety of toys for their children. Home made toys are very handy for children to play. When parents themselves prepare toys for their children there is an emotional component involved in it. Parents enjoy watching their children play with toys prepared by them and it also calls for more of parental involvement in child's play. This inturn helps in better social and emotional development of children. Besides being homemade, these toys are cost effective and help parents evolve more creative ways of facilitating children's play.

Often the same toy can be used at different age levels and in different ways to stimulate a variety of senses.

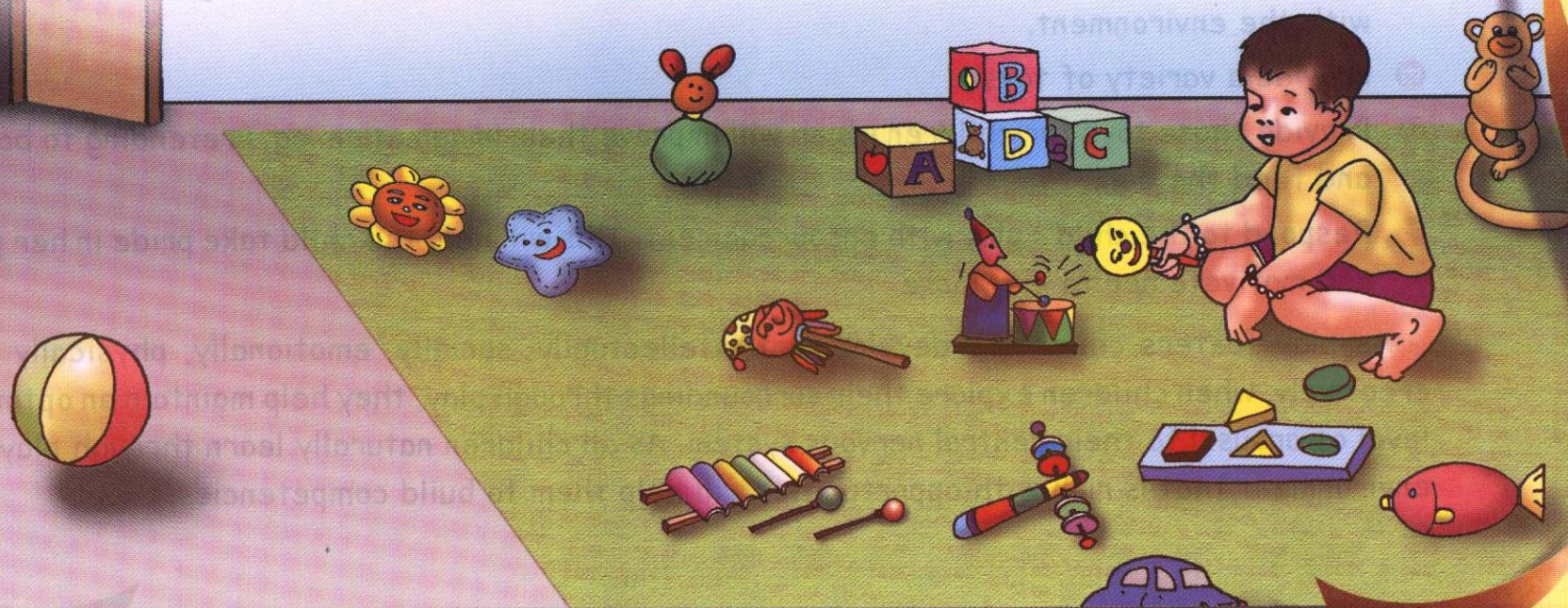


PRECAUTIONS FOR CHILDREN'S PLAY

Whether it is an infant or a toddler, it is advisable for parents to stay in close supervision. Parents in their enthusiasm to see their children play, often overlook certain unforeseen dangers, which could occur during play. Therefore, necessary precautions have to be taken to provide a safe and enjoyable playtime for children.

- ❗ Keep children away from **kitchen stoves, heaters, boilers, inflammable materials** and potential fire areas which may lead to fire accidents.
- ❗ Do not allow children to play in **stuffy and dingy places** as there is a danger of suffocation.
- ❗ Keep children away from **buckets, pools and tubs of water** as there is a danger of drowning.
- ❗ Prevent children from playing in areas such as near **open wells, open drains, on wet floors, on roof tops** where they may be susceptible to injuries.

Make children's play area safe and allow maximum exploration with minimum restrictions.



PLAY ENVIRONMENT

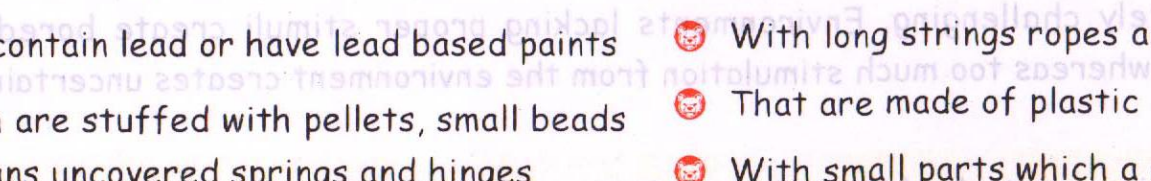
The quality of the environment within and outside the home is very crucial for any individual. However, the environment within the home is more critical for infants and toddlers as they are nurtured in this environment much before they are exposed to the environment outside the home. Therefore, home environment is directly related to the developmental status of the child. Favorable home environment fosters better learning experiences and stimulation which contribute to the child's development.

- ❗ Avoid over stimulating the child. Be sensitive to the child's signals when she cries or looks away. Understand that the child no longer enjoys that particular activity or is not in a frame of mind to play.
- ❗ Make sure to choose toys according to the child's age and ability. For eg. the child will feel helpless rather than challenged if toys designed for older children are provided.
- ❗ Value your child's play. Understand that it is the child's means of learning and acquainting with the environment.
- ❗ Provide a variety of toys.
- ❗ Provide those toys for children which will improve their imagination. eg. Pretending to bathe and feed the doll.
- ❗ Respond to the child's play with encouragement. This will help the child take pride in her play and motivate her to play more

As play fosters children's development intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically and creatively, when children explore their surroundings through play, they help maintain an optimum level of arousal to their central nervous system. As all children naturally learn through play, an environment that is rich with opportunities will help them to build competencies.

TOYS THAT ARE HAZARDOUS TO CHILDREN

Toys need not be expensive or complex. Remember that infants will poke, bang, pull, twist and suck on every toy given. Therefore, it is advisable to avoid toys that can be hazardous to the child. Such toys.

- 
- With sharp edges, points, and splinters
 - That contain lead or have lead based paints
 - Which are stuffed with pellets, small beads or beans uncovered springs and hinges which could prick fingers and break into sharp pieces.
 - Which are not covered and could pinch fingers
 - With unfinished metal edges
 - With long strings ropes and thread
 - That are made of plastic
 - With small parts which a child can choke, eg. Springs and/or hinges
 - That are too heavy for the child



PROBLEMS AT PLAY

While play comes naturally for some children, for others it must be initiated and encouraged. Play is a natural activity for children, and when they do not exhibit this natural activity, it is a cause for concern. This indicates that there is a problem somewhere.

The problem can be in any area of development, be it in physical, visual, mental or in speech, language, communication.

It may be that the child has not attained her full potential expected at that age in life or that her development is delayed. A developmental delay occurs when a child has a delayed achievement of one or more of her milestones. This may affect the child's speech and language, fine and gross motor skills, and / or personal and social skills.

Children with disability have a developmental delay. These children are called **Developmentally delayed**. There are some children at risk upon conception and their birth becomes subject to hazards of human existence and environment in which they live. Children are considered to be at risk when they have been subjected to certain adverse genetic, prenatal, natal and post natal or environmental conditions that are known to cause defects which are highly correlated to the appearance of later abnormalities.

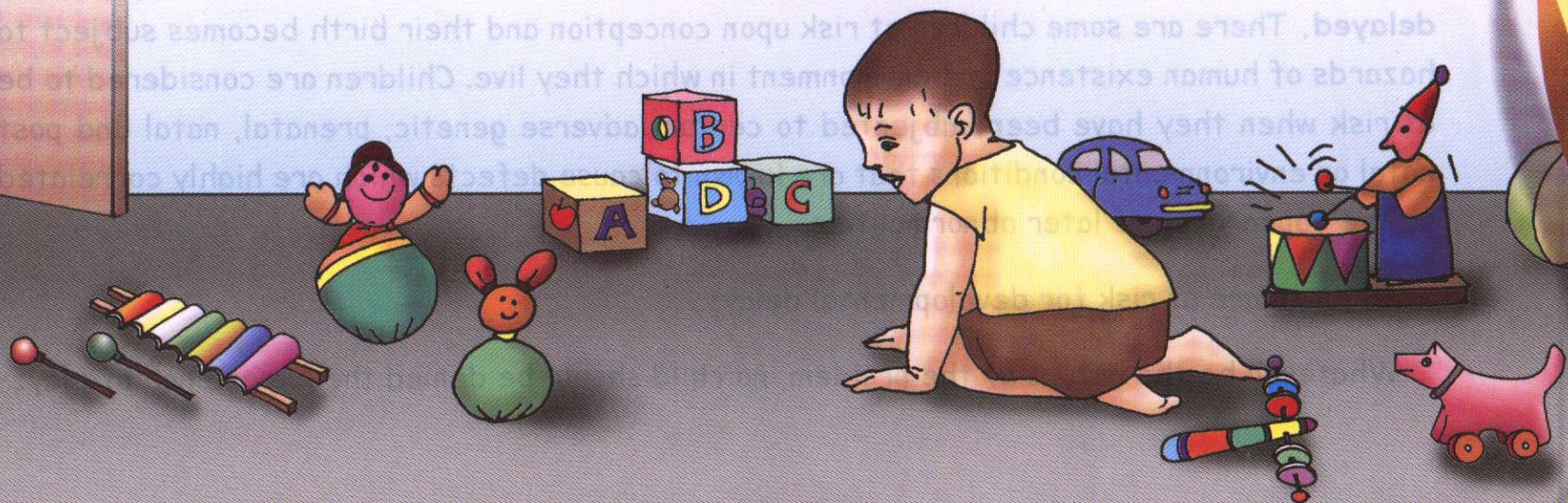
Children are at risk for developmental delays.

Whatever be the nature of the problem, no child should be denied the experience of play.

Play is a medium through which children learn and enjoy, therefore no child should be deprived of it.

To accommodate play needs of children with developmental delays, parents and care givers have to take care and caution to enable them to participate in all kinds of play activities being mindful of their limitations.

These children have difficulty exploring and interacting with the environment, depending on their disability. Although some of the children with developmental delays can adapt to their limitations and compensate for their difficulties, it usually demands considerable effort in caring for their development.



PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS

- ❶ Children with motor problems
- ❷ Children with cognitive problems
- ❸ Children with hearing problems
- ❹ Children with visual problems
- ❺ Children with speech and language problems

While planning play activities for children with specific problems or multiple problems, care should be taken to use activities for optimizing the abilities of the existing senses to make up for the lack/limitation in other senses.

Information you need to know before dealing with children with developmental delays

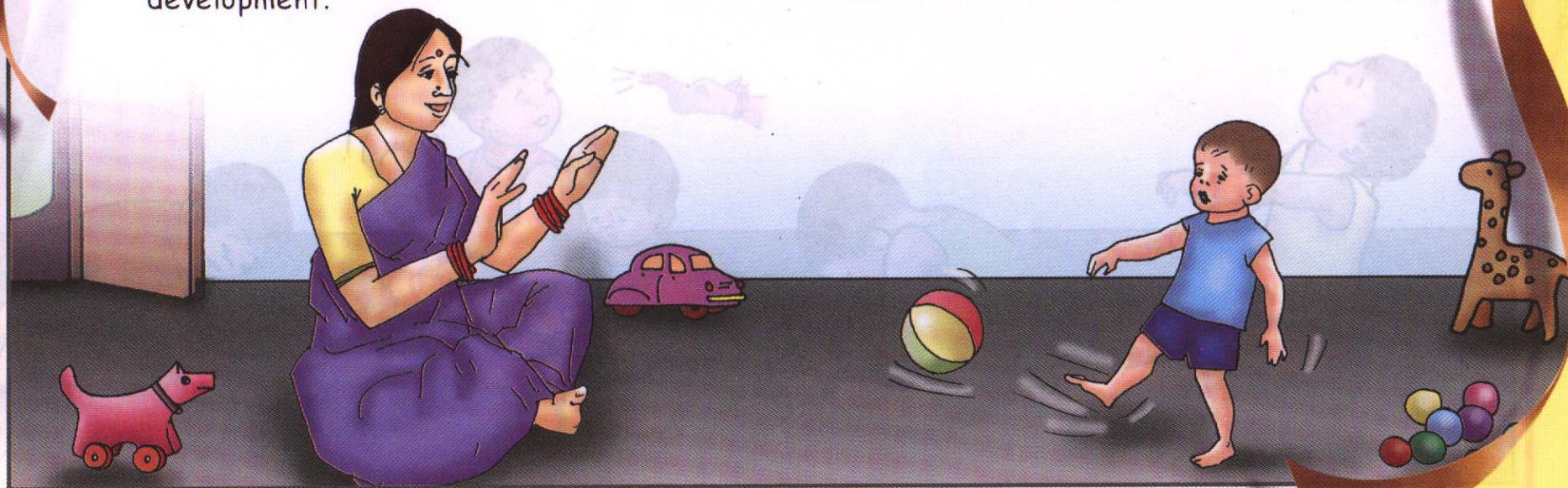
- ❶ The kind of limitation each area of disability will set on the child.
- ❷ How to promote the existing abilities in the child.
- ❸ What kind of modifications are to be made in the play and the materials used.



PLAY IN CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS

Children with disabilities have limitations in play depending on the type of disability. Play involves the use of Motor (limbs), Cognition (Thinking, reasoning), Sensory (Visual, auditory, hearing) tactile (touch), Olfactory (Smell), Kinesthetic (movement and balance), Social and Emotional components. These components are used either separately or in combination. For example, ball games require visual ability to follow the direction in which the ball is moving, motor ability, to catch and throw the ball, mental ability, to understand the game. Therefore, play integrates many of the senses. Children are more likely to learn and remember what is being told to them when they see, hear, feel, smell and taste it. Learning is strengthened when several senses send the same messages to the brain.

When infants play, they engage in looking, listening, touching and moving with the objects and people in their environment. Play provides them the experience of connecting what they see with what they hear, taste and touch. It helps infants to develop sensory connections that provide input to the developing brain and influence their cognitive, physical, motor, social and emotional development.



PLAY IN CHILDREN WITH MOTOR DELAYS

When a baby does not develop age-appropriate motor skills, intervention is necessary. Occupational and Physical therapy can be vital links towards independent mobility. Frequently, children just need a 'boost' and therapists provide parents with a simple exercise programme to facilitate movement through play at home.

Play not only serves as a mode of intervention but also helps children to gain confidence. Children with motor problems can have hypotonia or hypertonicity.

Children with hypotonia have :

- 🐱 Decreased resistance to movement.
- 🐱 Loose joints.
- 🐱 Hyper flexibility of joints.
- 🐱 Soft, floppy muscles.

To stimulate children with hypotonia :

- 🐱 Vestibular (balance) stimulation can be given by means of fast movements on a hammock.
- 🐱 Provide tactile stimulation by rough textured clothes and tapping.
- 🐱 Provide auditory stimulation like playing loud and jazzy music.
- 🐱 Provide visual stimulation like introducing very bright colours.

Children with hypertonia have :

- Increased resistance to movement
- Decreased movement in joints
- Problem/inability to initiate movement

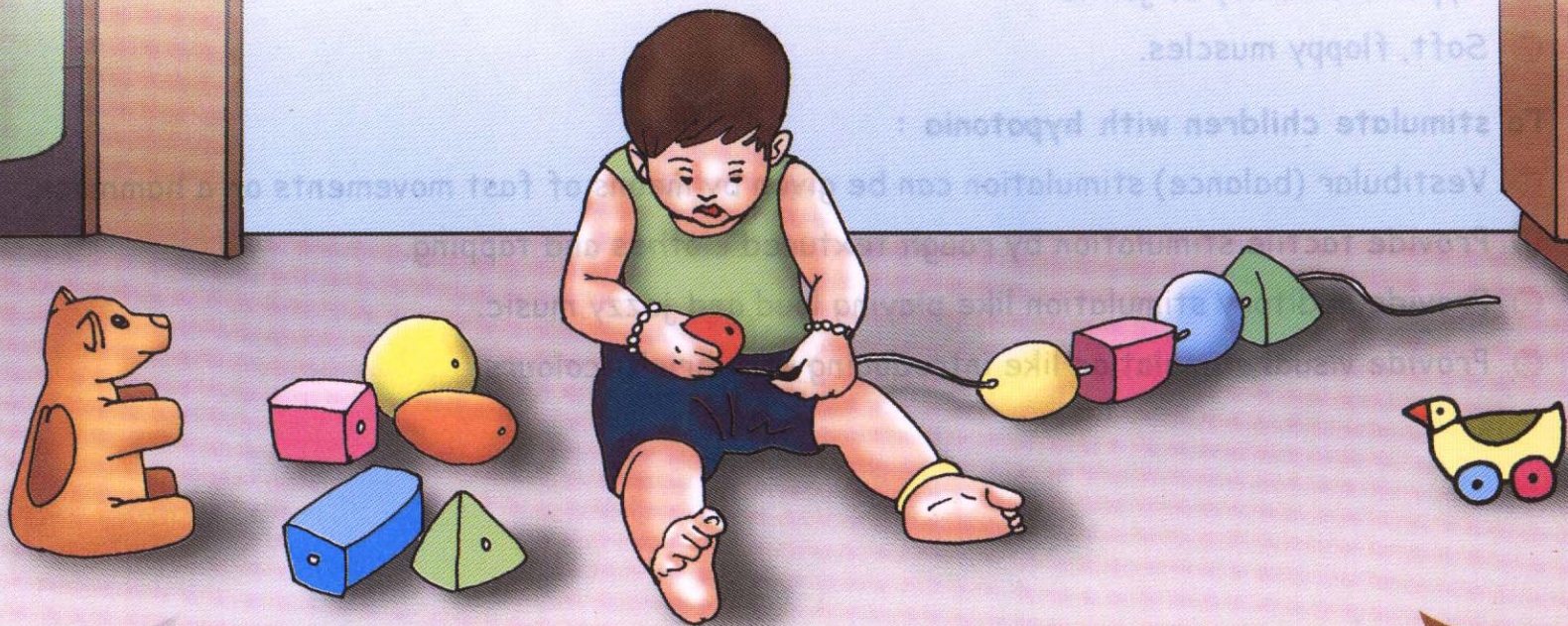
To stimulate children with hypertonia vestibular stimulation can be given by slow rhythmic and gentle slow movements by means of a swing / hammock

Provide tactile stimulation like using soft textures and tapping gently.

Problems faced by children with Motor delays during play :

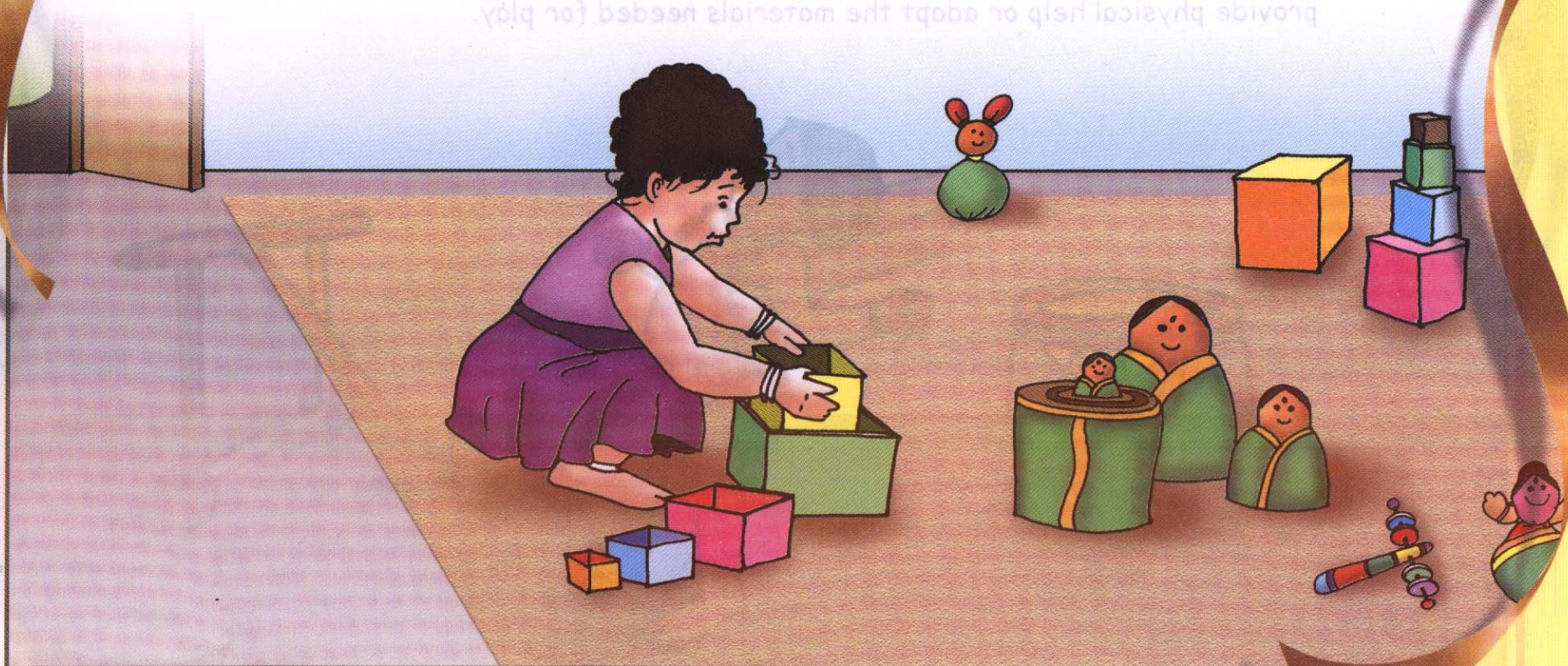
Activities which require physical strength like walking, running, crawling and jumping are affected due to weakness in limbs.

- Restriction in movement of arms will affect activities like reaching, grasping, exploring.
- Poor coordination of fingers will affect activities like holding, beading, fixing etc.



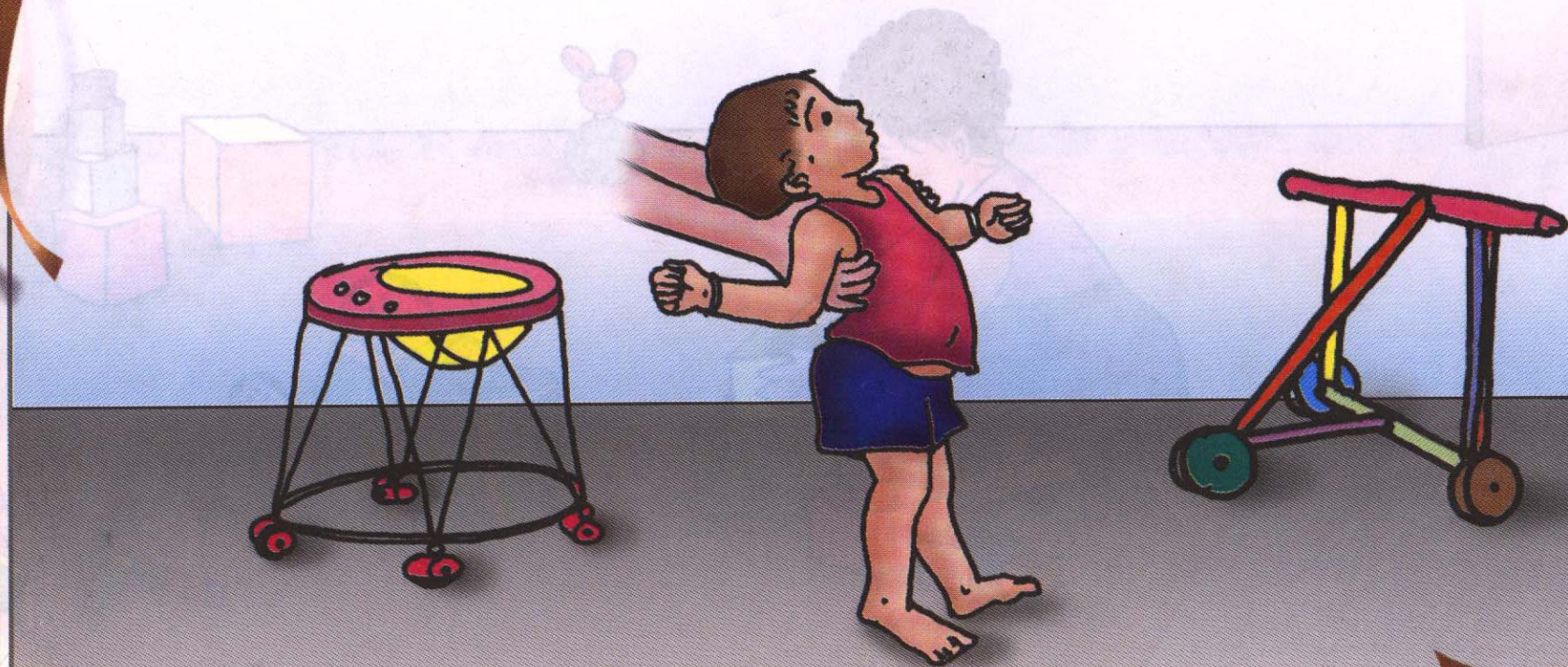
PLAY ACTIVITIES FOR FOR CHILDREN WITH MOTOR DELAYS

- ❶ In order to improve limb and finger movements, children should be given toys that challenge their growing powers. Toys such as empty containers with easily removable lids to take off and put on, carton boxes to climb upon or into, and building blocks to build structures are most appropriate.
- ❷ Toys that strengthen large muscles include wheeled toys, large balls, hollow boxes etc.



FACILITATING MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

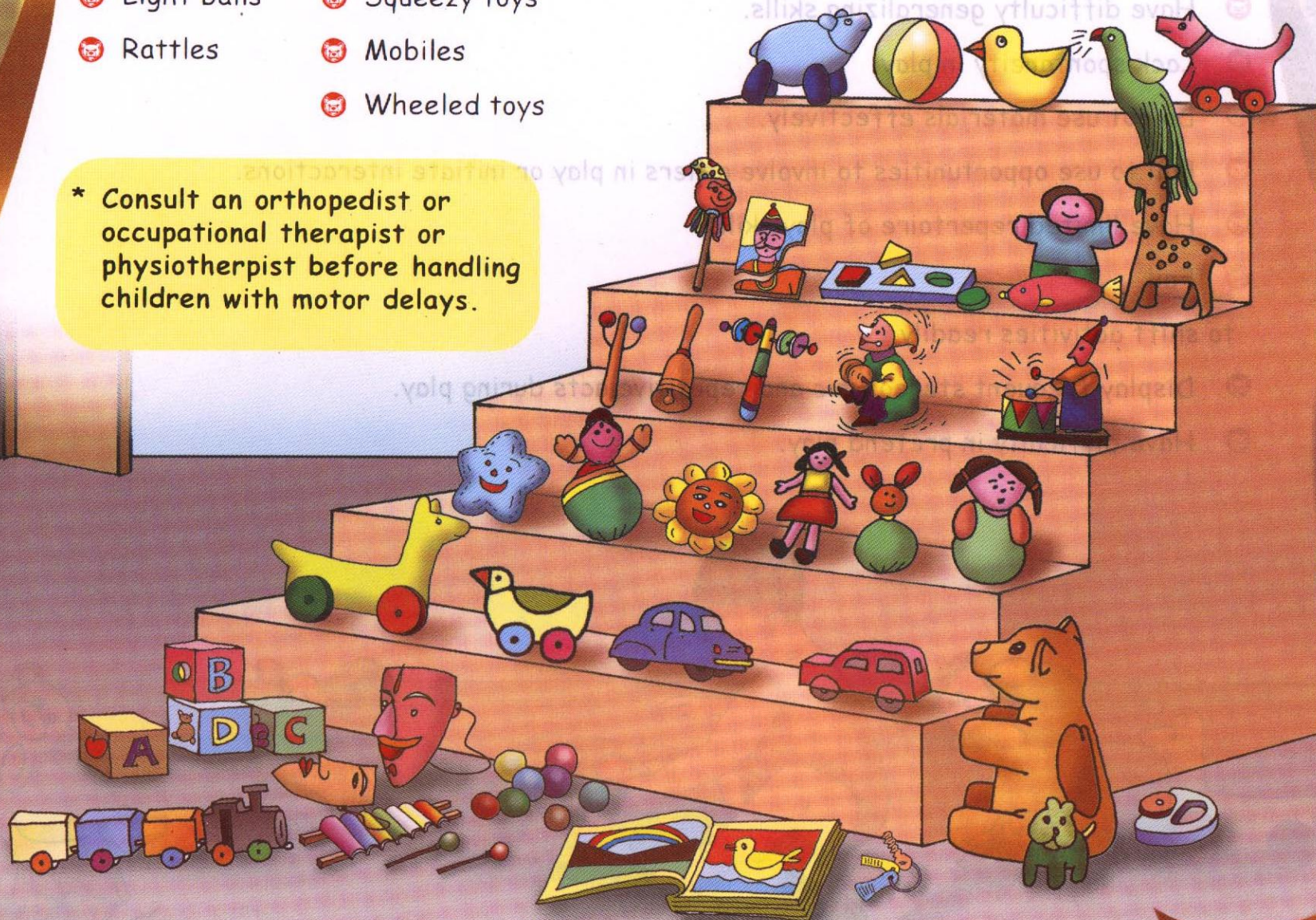
- Position the child appropriately to prevent abnormal movements during play, (It will facilitate normal movements).
- It is advisable to provide the child with a variety of play activities which will involve the use of fingers and gives the child a feel of different textures.
- To enable the child use her feet, advice activities like making foot prints in the sand.
- If the child is able to use both hands, encourage her to do so even during play.
- Incorporate play activities which involve the use of arms and legs.
- For children, who can use only one hand or have weak, uncoordinated hand movements, provide physical help or adapt the materials needed for play.



PLAY MATERIALS RECOMMENDED FOR CHILDREN WITH MOTOR DELAYS/PROBLEMS

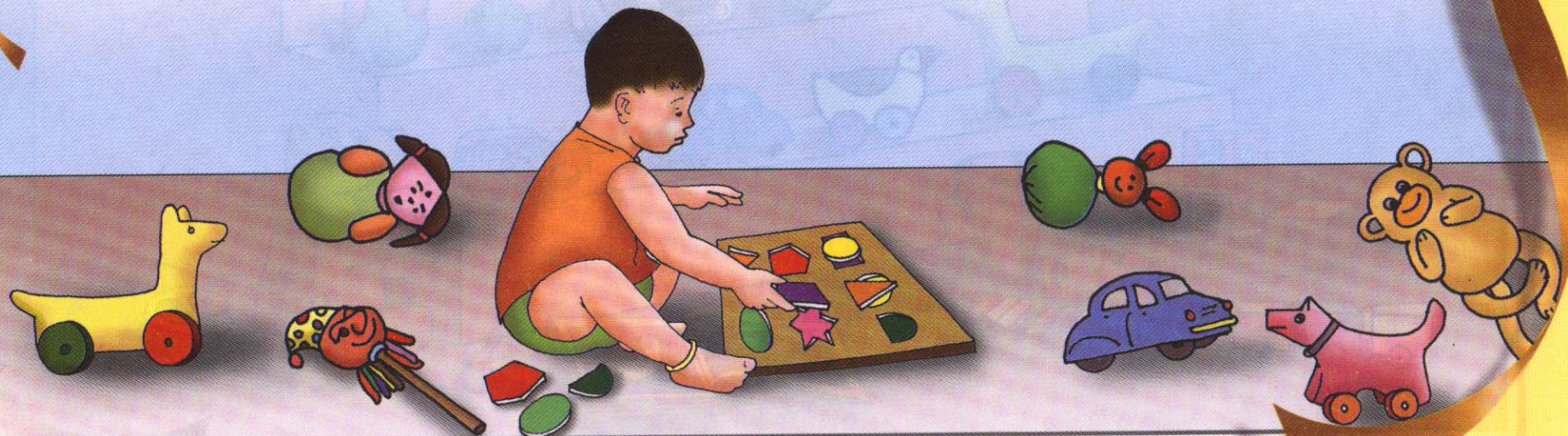
- Light balls
- Squeezy toys
- Rattles
- Mobiles
- Wheeled toys

* Consult an orthopedist or occupational therapist or physiotherapist before handling children with motor delays.



PLAY IN CHILDREN WITH COGNITIVE DELAYS

- Take longer time to learn basic concepts.
- Have difficulty generalizing skills.
- Lack spontaneity in play.
- Do not use materials effectively.
- Fail to use opportunities to involve others in play or initiate interactions.
- Have limited repertoire of play skills.
- Fail to shift activities readily.
- Display frequent stereotypic and repetitive acts during play.
- Have difficulty in pretend play.



PLAY ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WITH COGNITIVE DELAYS

- Give children the chance to play with a wide range of toys, which provide repetition of the same skills in different and interesting ways.
- Toys need to be motivating and rewarding to encourage the child.

Play materials for children with cognitive deficits :

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| • Dangling toys | • Pots and pans (small in size and light in weight) |
| • Mobiles in crib | • Picture books (especially cloth/cardboard with simple words) |
| • Squeezy toys | • Dolls (especially large ones) |
| • Nested plastic cups | • Toy telephone |
| • Boxes with lids | • Puzzles (5-10 pieces) |
| • Soft ball | • Vehicles (cars, boat, train) |
| • Stuffed animals | • Sandbox, shovel and pail |
| | • Water toys (cups and funnels) |

*** Activities for children with cognitive delays are to be carried out in consultation with a child development specialist.**

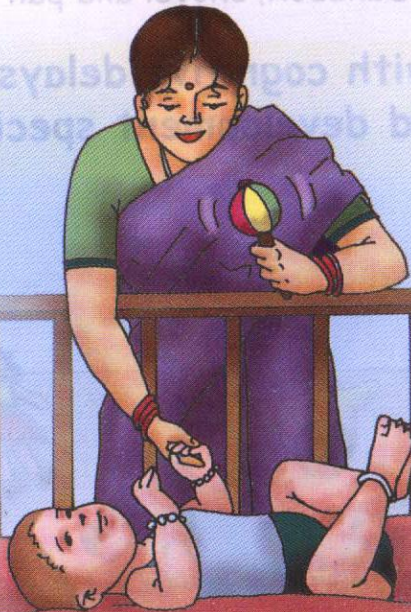


PLAY IN CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

Problems in play for children with visual impairment are apparent when one considers the important role vision plays in all levels of play.

- ❶ Inability to imitate actions or expressions.
- ❷ Inability to know the source or origin of the play objects.
- ❸ Inability to watch or track play objects.
- ❹ Delay in exploring the environment and objects.
- ❺ Less likely to engage in elaborate play activities.
- ❻ Imitation games and action games come later in their development.
- ❼ Do not use their hands to reach and explore objects.

As these children receive less visual inputs about how others are playing, they are more likely to play in isolation.



PLAY ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT


- Encourage games which provide physical manipulation and auditory stimulation.
- Play material should be such that it should appeal to the senses.
- Include soft toys, squeaky toys, for sand and water play.
- Talk to the child about the activities happening in the environment.
- Avoid using vague words associated with visual space, such as "the toy is over there".
- Instead, use a known point of reference, like the ball is under the table".
- Help the child to listen, recognize and identify voices and sounds by playing all sorts of sound games.

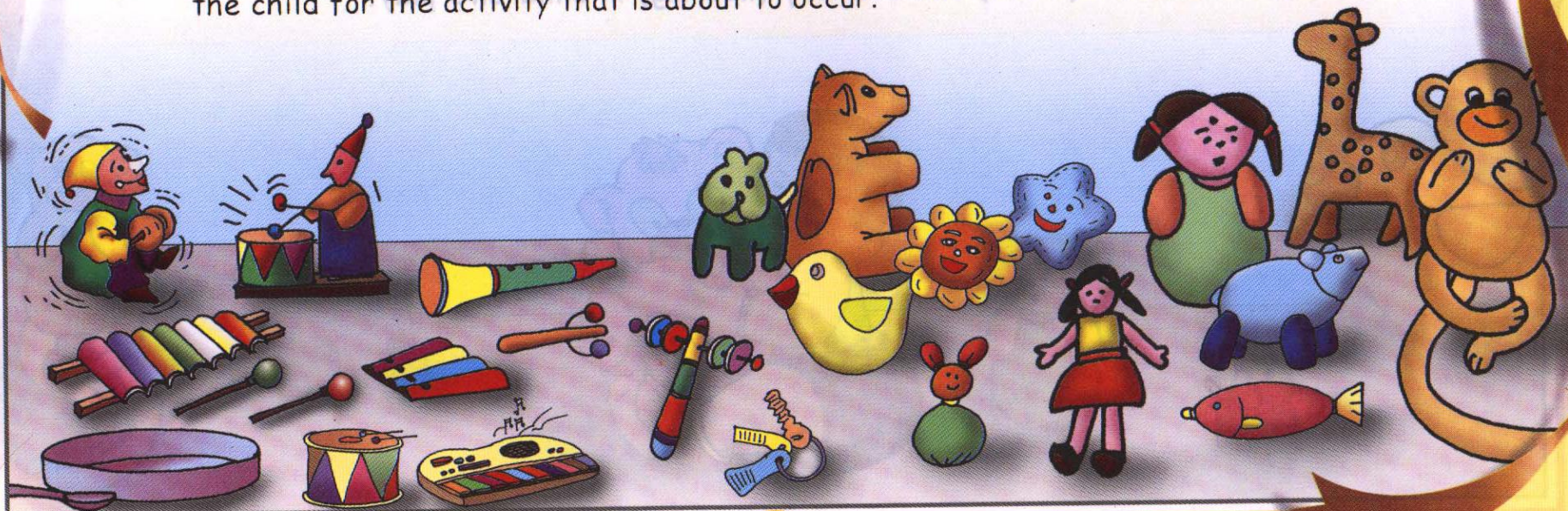
Teach the child to associate certain activities with specific objects, for instance, before washing her let the child play with water and soap. This will prepare the child for the activity to occur.

The important aspect here is to use the other senses such as tactile(touch), olfactory (smell), kinesthetic (touch) and auditory (hearing) in children's play.



Take sensible precautions for the child to get off stairs safely; lock up medicines and move breakables out of the baby's reach (just as you would with a sighted child). Let the baby crawl, play and explore to her hearts delight.

-  Teach your baby to associate certain activities with specific objects. For instance, before washing him/her let the baby play with the water and the soap. This play will help prepare the child for the activity that is about to occur.

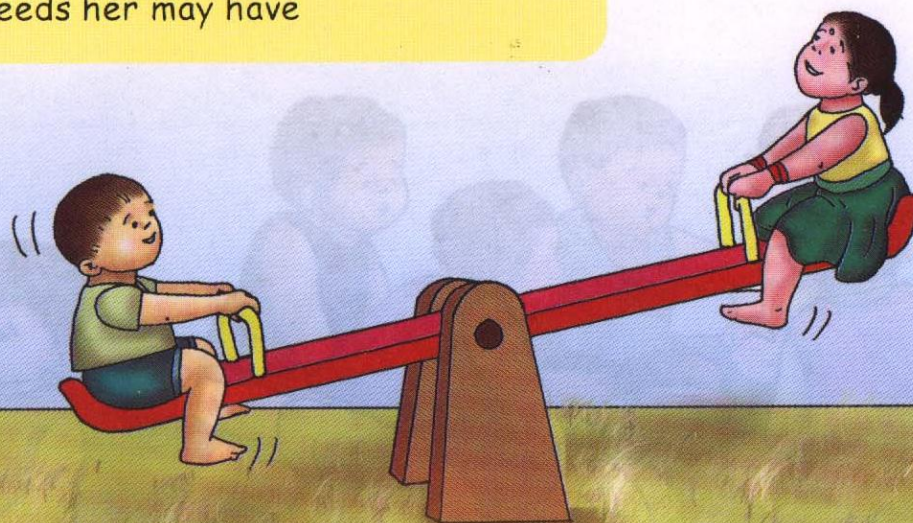


PLAY MATERIALS FOR CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

- Noise makers
- Wheeled toys
- Sea saw
- Different textured toys
- Bright coloured toys
- Musical toys
- Rubber balls
- Feather dusters
- Swings
- Bean bags

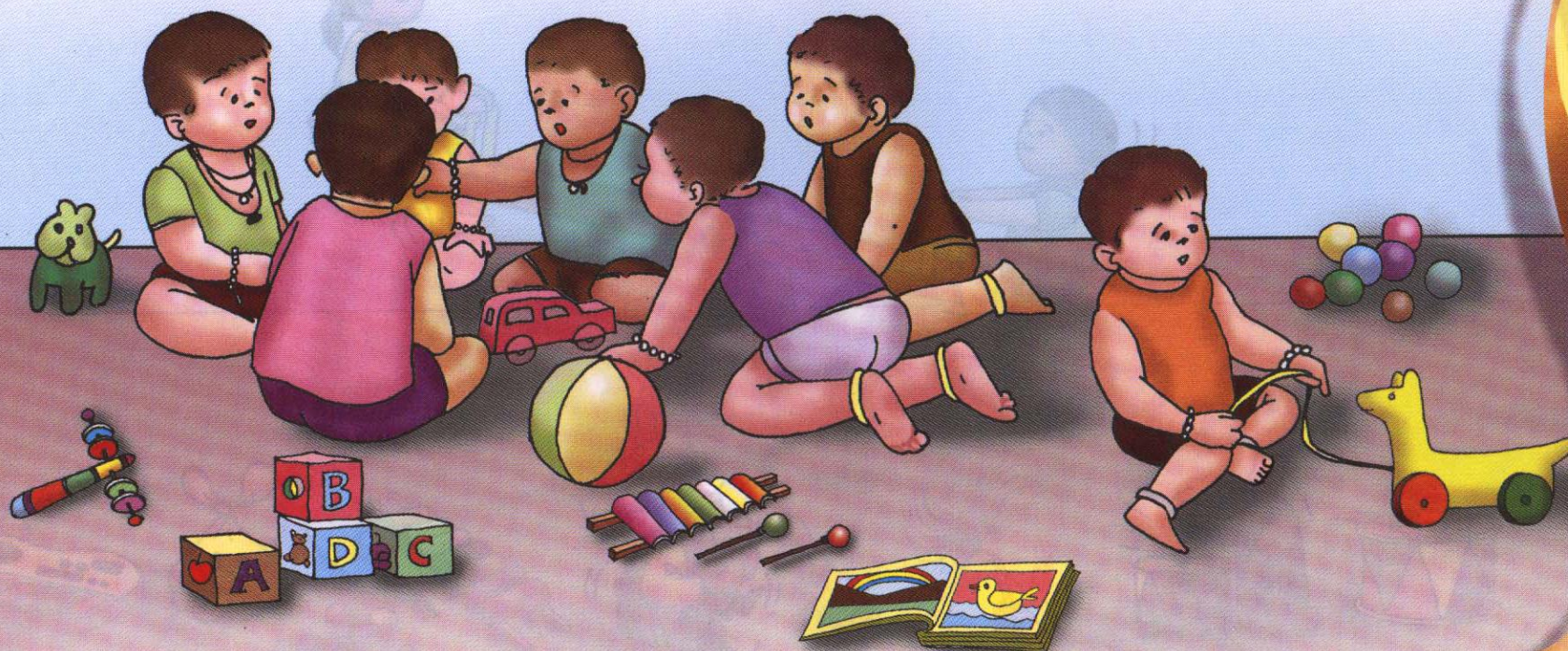
Consult an ophthalmologist to learn :

- How much vision your child has
- How her vision status may change over time
- Any special needs her may have



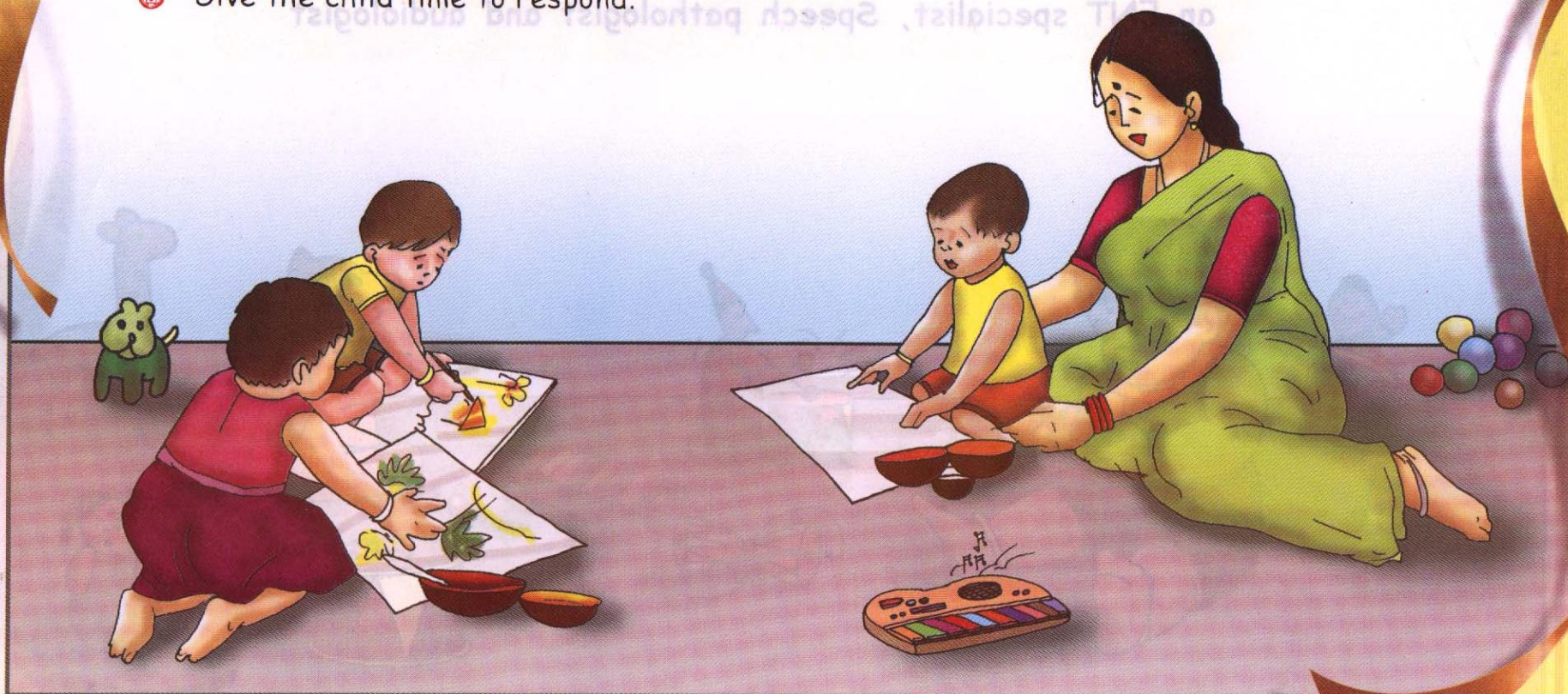
PLAY IN CHILDREN WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT

- ❶ The play behaviour of children with hearing impairment varies from play of normal children especially in cooperative play.
- ❷ These children develop more of solitary play and have difficulties associating themselves with others.



PLAY ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT

- Play activities, which include more of imitation; visual and tactile clues should be included.
- Be sure to have the child's attention before speaking.
- It is important to be at the child's eye level so that he can see the speakers face.
- Encourage the child to interact during play activities.
- Give the child time to respond.



PLAY MATERIALS FOR CHILDREN WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT

- ❶ Puppets - Material like puppets help in imitation (body and speech)
- ❷ Loud sound making toys - Explore various environmental sounds and learn about them.
Helps in discrimination of sounds
- ❸ Manipulative toys - Helps in fine motor activity and concept learning.

For children with hearing impairment seek the advise of an ENT specialist, Speech pathologist and audiologist

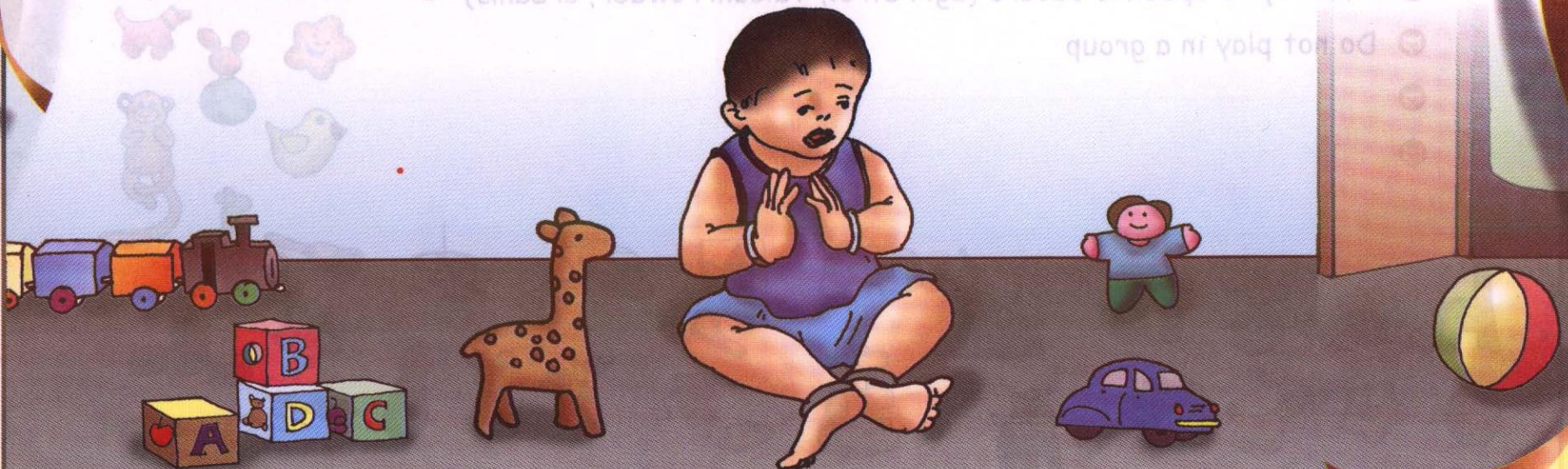


PLAY AS A MEANS TO IDENTIFY CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS

Play not only provides a medium of learning for children, it also serves as an important tool to identify problems in children. The kind of play the child is involved in has to be in accordance with her chronological age and level of maturity. Play is central to the child's behaviour and from observations of children's play it is possible to identify certain problems. Play becomes a basis for evaluation of children's developmental skills. Any deviations in play patterns of children should not be neglected and should be referred for appropriate and timely help.

Some of these children are :

- Autistic children
- Children with speech problems
- Under stimulated children
- Children with cognitive deficits



Autistic children:

- 🐱 Engage in solitary play
- 🐱 More repetitive use of toys
- 🐱 Indiscernable manipulation
- 🐱 More pounding activities than normal
- 🐱 More tactile play-usually self directed, persevering activities
- 🐱 Rarely use combined toys. Fail to combine toys in a creative way.
- 🐱 Occasionally request help from adults to complete a task
- 🐱 Smaller repertoire of play activities
- 🐱 Brief play with toys
- 🐱 Immature play
- 🐱 Choose fewer toys
- 🐱 Affinity to specific odours (eg. Petrol, Talcum Powder, creams)
- 🐱 Do not play in a group



CHILDREN WITH SPEECH PROBLEMS

- ❶ Lack organizing skills necessary for purposeful and appropriate play
- ❷ More solitary play
- ❸ Less social play
- ❹ Less imaginative play



UNDERSTIMULATED CHILDREN

- ❶ Repetitive movements such as body rocking, head banging, hand flapping and teeth grinding to gratify senses
- ❷ Lack of exploratory play
- ❸ Less interpersonal communication
- ❹ Less social play
- ❺ Indulge in self stimulation

❻ More solitary play

❼ Less social play

❽ Less imaginative play



CHILDREN WITH COGNITIVE DEFICITS

- 🐱 Indulge in repetitive and stereotypic behaviour
- 🐱 Less social play
- 🐱 Less ability to organize play activities
- 🐱 Progress slowly in the normal sequence of play development
- 🐱 Lack sustained attention
- 🐱 Destructive or inappropriate use of objects
- 🐱 Persistence of narrow and inflexible methods of exploration
- 🐱 Lack of initiation in play
- 🐱 Play only when encouraged or prompted by an adult



CONCLUSION

Play adds to the quality of children's life as it fosters all round development. No group needs play more than those children who are born with, or who acquire, physical, mental, emotional or social disabilities. Therefore, what is best for them should benefit them and not handicap them further.

Above all, children need more love than toys to develop. Parents' love and attention is far more critical for infants healthy development and well-being. It is not the quantity of time but the quality of time that parents spend with their children that is important and productive. In fact, newborns are more captured by human faces than by inanimate playthings. Being gently and playfully cuddled, touched, and talked to contribute to children's earliest impressions that the world is wonderful and safe and can be explored without fear.

