

The Importance of Increasing Children's Outdoor Play Opportunities

How Outdoor Play Environments Contribute to Children's Development

to go outdoors. I want to play with". We also hear many adults suggest that children learn far more indoors than outdoors. Research is telling us that outdoor play offers children far more learning opportunities than indoor environments. Below, I provide an overview of some of the key attributes that

for children's physical development. When children are engaged in play that requires them to use their bodies, such as running, climbing, and jumping, certain gross motor skills, such as balance, how to control, how to balance, and how to use their bodies within the space.

The level of physical activity begun in childhood has a significant impact on later life. Children who develop strong balancing skills will be better prepared for body movements in later life. Strong muscles and bone density decrease the severity of an injury and healing time in case of injury. Physical and active outdoor play improve heart and lung function, reduce overweight and obesity issues, as well as high cholesterol.

Children require environments where they can engage in outdoor play that builds upon both their fine and gross motor skills. Activities such as jumping, running, and physical motion including pushing, pulling, stretching upwards and downwards, climbing, squatting, and speed are essential for physical activity

Emotional development is complex. During the early years, children are developing the framework to build self-confidence. A child's self-confidence strongly influences their desire and ability to take risks in their play and learning environments. When children experience changes in their environment, such as moving environments, such as child abuse or changes in family units or disasters, they benefit from having active outdoor play environments that allow them to formulate a variety of play options that they can use to work out aspects of stress that they are dealing with. This helps them to work through the trauma

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tackle a new experience.

knowing. Group play, such as rough and tumble and big-body play not only contribute to children's

Children require space to move around and to use different parts of their body. Social development

Inclusion: Outdoor play environments that have multiple places and spaces for all children to experience equality to all. Inclusion occurs in spaces and places where children with abilities and adults advocate to celebrate the skills and abilities of all people in the setting. Often, it is the design of the play spaces, including the equipment and surfacing, rather than children that influence exclusion of children with disabilities. When children with disabilities are in environments that support their development, positive self-esteem and an understanding of diversity is developed among all children and families.

neural circuits of the brain become wired. Brain development affects all aspects of development.

Children who are exposed to outdoor environments that require them to move physically participate in activities that challenge their abilities and skills. Children who are able to climb, dig, and run, for example, accomplish climbing to the top of the tree, or making the sand wet enough to mold particular shapes, all

of which are essential to their development. Outdoor play environments and self-regulation skills are combined—children increase their abilities to focus and control their behaviors, including how they problem solve and work with their peers. Challenging outdoor play opportunities increase children's manipulative skills, their abilities to make appropriate judgments and reasoning, and use their creativity to support their ideas and perspectives.

Children's cognitive skills can be enhanced when they have access to outdoor experiences such as climbing and swinging to support perceptual processes. Spatial orientation can be achieved through areas that require children to climb, crawl under and over, and build vertically and horizontally. Scientific principles including gravity and spatial awareness is gained from outdoor play that includes speed, height, and rapid movement.

Outdoor play and games are essential to children's development. Whether the games are individually

solving. These skills transfer to later academic learning.

Environmental citizenship refers to the perspective that children and adults are an integral part of the

environment and how we interact, engage, and care for the planet. Environmental citizenship is a perspective of living better. Remotely a positive environmental citizen begins with the role modeling that children are

space, time, and natural environments for activities and exploration and that supports them in engaging in discoveries that move from simple to more complex, contributes to them learning to become more

environmental citizenship (Blanchet-Cohen & Elliott, 2011).

Think about indoor and outdoor environments. When you think about indoor play experiences how does