

Making Sense of the Preschooler

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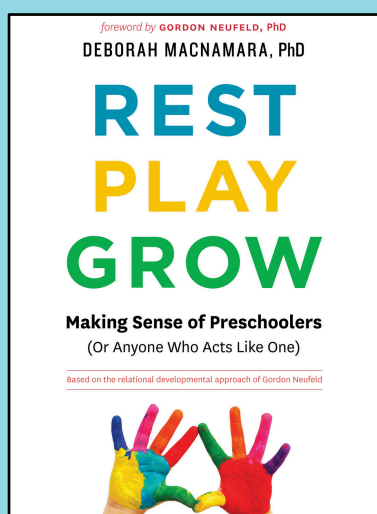
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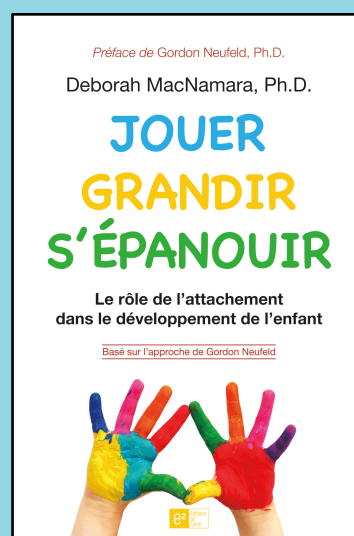
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REST PLAY GROW: Making Sense if Preschoolers (Or Anyone Who Acts Like One)



Deborah MacNamara, PhD.



Who are Preschoolers?

They are immature and their immaturity is not a mistake but the perfect beginning from which we all start.

Deborah MacNamara, PhD



Just like the pointy yellow tomato flower has the capacity to grow into a round, red fruit so do preschoolers have within themselves all that is needed to grow into mature, caring adults.

It takes time, patience and guidance from the adults who care for them.

How they're designed developmentally



They have BIG emotions!

1 thought – 1 feeling – at a time
very little filter (brain immaturity)



For them fair is they get it ALL!

don't yet have the concept of sharing



"NO! I do it myself, but don't make me!"

don't have the capacity for independence



Preschoolers' fundamental **NEEDS**



They need to PLAY

- to practice life in a space free of consequences



They need to REST

- from having to make things work



They need to have their TEARS

- the outward manifestation of the adaptive process at work

WHY IS PLAY IMPORTANT?



PLAYING OUT EMOTIONS

ALARM at PLAY

**Play is like a release valve –
it allows the emotions to move through.**



- playing with monsters
- being the monster
- scary stories (one step removed)
- pretending to be scared
- playing "disaster"
- playing hospital/being sick

PLAYING OUT EMOTIONS

Taking FRUSTRATION into play

**PLAYING OUT the impulses to
MAKE THINGS WORK**

- making things perfect - puzzles
- constructing and crafts
- building – robots, Lego, blocks



*When children can't make their world work, let's
give them a chance to make other things "work".*

PLAYING OUT EMOTIONS

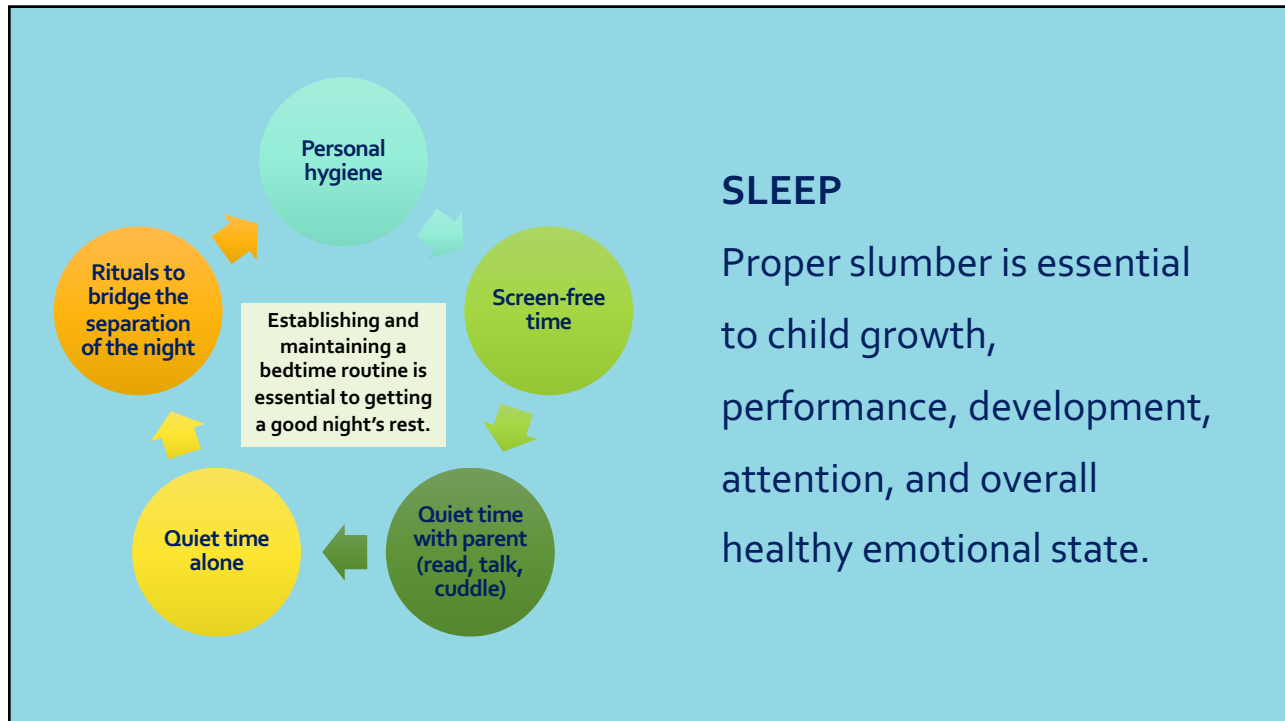
Taking FRUSTRATION into play


**PLAYING OUT the impulses
to ATTACK or DESTROY**

- destroying & demolishing
- hitting & throwing
- kicking & screaming
- war games
- attacking games
- play fighting



- reduces levels of frustration
- decreases aggression and violence in real life





WHEN SAYING GOODNIGHT IS HARD

20 WAYS TO BRIDGE THE NIGHTTIME DISTANCE WITH CHILDREN

Nighttime represents the biggest separation of the day for a child. There is no one to collect them in their dreams and care for them. The more immature and dependent a child, the more heightened their alarm can be over separation at night, particularly sensitive kids.

If separation is the problem then attachment and providing a sense of connection is the cure. The following suggestions can help bridge the nighttime separation by giving a child a sense that a parent is holding onto them.

Give them a parent's object to sleep with	Spray some perfume or cologne in the room to remind them of the parent	Record a parent singing a song to the child	Leave a love letter under their pillow to find in the morning	If a parent can't be there to say goodnight, record a story for the child to listen to
Put pictures of their loved ones in their room and tell the child they will watch over them	Tie invisible strings around your bed's posts to attach them together	Make up a story and tell them you will continue it the next day	Fill their pillow with kisses and hugs	When they are asleep, kiss their head or face with lipstick or and show them in the morning
Tell them you will meet them in their dreams and plan an adventure to have together	Give them your pillow to sleep with to be close to you	Tell them to listen for your sounds, footsteps, or singing as they lie in bed because you are close by	Sew a quilt or small blanket and tell them you put a lot of love into it so they shouldn't run out of it through the night	Leave a book under their pillow when they are sleeping and tell them to bring it to you in the morning to read
Get a special container and have the child put all of wishes in there for the following day	Tell them each morning how you checked on them in the night and tucked them back in or something to indicate you were there	Take a selfie of you and the child when they are asleep and show them in the morning	Take a picture of them while they are sleeping and print it out and leave it on their door	Visit them every 5 to 10 minutes and give them a paper heart that symbolizes your love for them. When they are asleep, put a stack of of hearts beside their bed so that they see them in the morning and believe you checked on them throughout the night

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What pushes preschoolers' **BUTTONS**



They cannot tolerate **SEPARATION**

- put the focus on your next point of connection



They struggle with being **COERCED**

- collect their attention, be playful with requests



They have difficulty with expectations of **MATURE BEHAVIOR**

- sharing, waiting their turn, being patient, managing conflict, etc.

WHEN SAYING GOODBYE IS HARD

The challenge with young children is their attachment needs are high, their immaturity renders them highly dependent on their caretakers, and they live in a world that is full of separation.

Children only miss the people they are attached to and while this makes it hard to say goodbye, it doesn't mean it is bad that they miss us.

WE NEED TO HELP CHILDREN SEPARATE FROM US BY

Making sure they are cared for by people they are attached to

Drawing attention to the next point of connection instead of our separation

Giving them something to hold onto that represents our connection

20 WAYS TO BRIDGE THE DAYTIME SEPARATION

Give the child an object to hold onto that reminds them of their parent, e.g. keychain, engraved sock or glove

Tell the child the plan for the day and what you will do when you pick them up

Give them a token necklace with family pictures in it

Tell the child there are never-ending kisses and hugs in the token about they need them

Write a note and tell it to their parent for later

Put their favourite household item in their pocket and tell them you put love in it when you made it

Put a picture of their parent in their pocket for love access throughout the day

Have the school or daycare display family photos and encourage the child to look at them as needed

Have a quick visit at lunchtime to say hello or drop off their food

Spray a scent on the child that will remind them of the people they are close to

Wear matching bracelets or bands and tell them you will be wearing the same colour as them

Blow kisses into their pockets and tell them you will be there in case they miss you

Tell them you will hold onto the same lunch as them all the same time of the day

Encourage them to ask you to their head and that you will answer their questions

Tell the child there are invisible strings that will connect you to each other throughout the day and pretend to connect them before you leave

Put a picture in their lunch box of what you will do after school or that evening together

Get matching bracelets or bands to wear while separated from each other

Cut their sock into the shape of a heart and tell them you put love in it

Tell them that when they come home they can check the mail and that they can share a letter you have written for them

Tell them a secret to hold onto for the day and that they can share it with everyone at dinner

REST PLAY GROW

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How CAN the adults in children's lives best support them?



Grooving and jamming together! (Emotional Expression through movement)



Encouragement of Family Time Playing Games Together



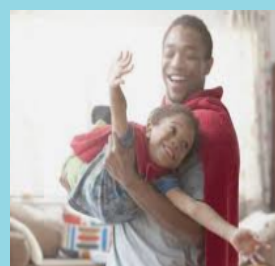
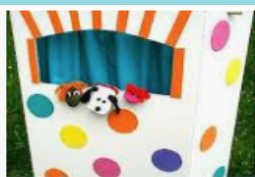
Encouragement of Family Time Building Forts Together



Encouragement of Family Time Baking & Cooking Together



Encouragement of Family Time Playing Dress-up, Creating Puppet Shows



**STAY IN CHARGE EVEN IF
YOU CAN'T BE IN CONTROL**
“I have decided that you may...,” “Let’s all”

We’re going on a bear hunt.
We’re going to catch a big one.
What a beautiful day!
We’re not scared.



Oh-oh! Grass!
Long, wavy grass.
We can’t go over it.
We can’t go under it.

Oh, no!
We’ve got to go through it!

Just as you cannot train a caterpillar to become a butterfly,
you cannot train a preschooler to become an adult.

Gordon Neufeld, PhD



GOOD DEVELOPMENT
requires
Patience and Faith

We can TRAIN A CHILD
to do a lot
of things at early ages
but we **SHOULDN’T**
MISTAKE this for
MATURITY.

Deborah MacNamara, PhD
Developmental Science
Translated into Practical Love

<https://macnamara.ca/>

HOME ABOUT» COUNSELLING BOOKS» ARTICLES» EVENTS CONTACT»

ARTICLES
WHY DO KIDS DO THAT?
INFOGRAPHICS

Please feel free to download these infographics and to share with others. Don't forget to check back for new resources and to stay posted to my social media channels for new ones.

THE PRESCHOOLER PERSONALITY

WHAT DOES A GOOD ATTACHMENT LOOK LIKE BETWEEN ADULTS AND KIDS?

Helping Kids Bounce Back: The Keys to Resiliency

What Makes a Parent Great?

Freedom of Expression: Guiding kids' emotions into maturity

Taking the Lead in Sibling Conflict

The Dance of Relationships and Why They Matter

What our Kids Need Us to Understand about Aggression

<https://www.rsbsupport.com/preparing-for-k4>

EVENTS Mental Health Sexuality Special Education Speech & Language Daily 6 & Play 5 Kindergarten REACH Blog

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Let's Explore Before K4! - Explorons avant la maternelle 4 ans!

Different spheres of development - different activities for your child to complete! Remember, it is all about exploration. Keep your child engaged and watch him/her grow!!

Différentes sphères du développement - différentes activités pour votre enfant! Rappelez-vous, ceci est pour permettre l'exploration! Garder votre enfant engagé et regardez-le grandir!

K4 bins - coffret pour la maternelle 4 ans

information & resources for the **TEACHERS**

Welcome to K4 project with RSB

Documents for **TEACHERS**:

- [K4 bin explained](#)
- [How to assemble the K4 bin](#)
- [Labels for the K4 bin](#)
- [Bingo Teacher Cards](#)

Materials included in the bin for **STUDENTS**

- [Welcome to our school](#)
- [K4 placemat bilingual](#)
- [Emotion BINGO game](#)
- [Emotion poster](#)

Materials included in the bin for **PARENTS**

- [Tips for parents bookmark](#)
- [Preschooler infographic](#)
- [Play infographic](#)
- [Tears and tantrums infographic](#)