Fred Rogers Timeless Wisdom

Pretend Play

“For children, play is both a serious and necessary business: a way for them to try on different roles, pretend to be bigger than they really are, stronger than they really are, or even, at times, smaller than they really are. When children play, they’re working.” - Fred Rogers

Playing gives children a chance to rehearse for events that may be worrisome to them - a visit to the doctor, a first haircut, or the first day of school. By pretending about such things, children can find out how they feel about them. When grownups are alert to children's play and pretending, they can often help children with their fears by letting them know what will happen in the course of a new experience and, just as important, what won't.

Pretending With Toys

Many open-ended toys, such as dolls, blocks, and puppets lead children naturally into creative play. Children can get the most out of play when they are encouraged to bring their own ideas, thoughts, and feelings to those open-ended toys, and when we offer them plenty of time and freedom to interact with the toys. When children know that adults value their creative play, they will be better able to transfer their creative ability to other areas, such as reading, writing, art, and even to social interactions, like problem-solving.

Play Leads to Symbolic Thinking

Children’s imaginations can soar when they are encouraged to turn everyday objects into exciting props and playthings. When you suggest that children use props in their play, you are helping them develop thinking and creative problem-solving skills that can be transferred to everyday life. Children's thinking and creative problem-solving skills can be transferred into everyday life experiences.
Using a prop to represent something also helps children with the foundation for reading, a skill that requires symbolic thinking. For reading, they'll need to understand that a circle is a symbol that stands for the letter "o" and certain sounds, and the letters D-O-G represent a word that stands for the animal called a dog.

**Problem Solving** When we watch children play, we get particular pleasure from seeing them use whatever they have to play with in unexpected ways. A child who uses an empty wrapping paper tube as a tunnel for little cars to go through...or a towel for a teddy bear's blanket is a creative child, a discoverer, and a problem-solver. Playtime in childhood can be the root of lifelong abilities that help us to cope, to learn, and to become all that we can be.

🎶 **Strategy Song:** When you pretend, you can do anything!

*Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood* closely parallels the gentle tone and emphasis on social and emotional strategies that made *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and Fred Rogers a TV icon. Fred’s creativity and innovation continue to thrive in 21st century TV. Teachers and parents will enjoy revisiting his messages with a new generation of characters.