



PSYCHOLOGY AND GAMES

“Only children know what they are looking for, said Little Prince. They waste their time on a ragdoll and it becomes so important, that if someone takes it from them, they cry...”
– *“Children are lucky, said the key holder.”*
“Little Prince”, Antoine Saint Exupery”

Playing precedes development, since, through it, children acquire skills, motives and attitudes necessary for their social adaptation. The educational value of playing has been the subject of research for numerous scientists. In particular, Spencer quotes that “playing is an outlet of surplus energy”. Hall claims that “playing is an evolution stage of the individual”. Freud focused on the fact that “playing consists of a person’s effort to satisfy their desires as well as face painful experiences which threaten the developing individual.”

Piaget discerns three types of playing, which characterize the individual from infant years to puberty:

- a) **Drill playing:** in this type of playing, the child repeats an activity many times
- b) **Symbolic playing:** in this type of playing, there is a free extension of object operation, emotions and experiences in a symbolic way. The child transforms reality, modifies data, regulates things and interprets experience in a free and imaginative way.
- c) **Social playing:** this type of playing is organized, precisely targeted with rules of action and cooperation.

Through the natural expression of a child playing, we become aware of its inner world, while its real relationships in the environment of his upbringing are also represented. In its activity during playing, a child can project future roles and values as it perceives and comprehends them through the actions and relations of adults. Playing is as natural as breathing. It is a complete means of expression of children which can overcome ethnic, language or other cultural differences. (Drewes, 2006)

Playing is so important for a child’s development that it is defended by The United Nations’ Convent for Child’s Rights, 1989, and it is defined as “the right of a child to relaxation and recreation, to participation in playing and recreational activities suitable for its age and to the free participation in the cultural life and arts.”

Playing is probably the most appropriate and powerful means in terms of development, so that a child can build relations with adults, develop correlations



between reason and result - which are necessary for the development of self-control, process stressful experiences and be taught social skills. (Chaloner, 2001).

Playing is capable of offering a child power and control, stemming from the mechanisms of problem solving and processing new experiences, ideas and concerns. Thus, it can build and cultivate feelings of self-confidence and accomplishment. Through playing and via interventions based on the game, children can communicate non-verbally, symbolically and actively.

Playing is not only indispensable for the promotion of natural child development but also has various therapeutic properties, especially for those children who face difficulties in verbal self-expression or for older children who display refusal or inability to express their emotions and difficulties.

Playing is used in therapy by play – therapists and other professionals who work with children as a means of dealing with emotional and behavioral difficulties. The use of playing in child therapy dates back to the 1930s and it has been used by therapists such as Hermione Hug-Hellmuth, Anna Freud and Melanie Klein. Since then many adult therapies have been adapted in order to address children.

“Children are totally egocentric.

They feel their needs with intensity and fight mercilessly to fulfill them”

Sigmund Freud

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