

## SHORT COURSES FOR VACATION CARE WORKERS

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### Course Number 3: Creating Play Opportunities

Course Duration 1.5 hours

#### Aim

This course focuses on how to create environments for children that provide for their enjoyment, interests and needs. It also highlights the ways in which staff can provide play and leisure opportunities for children that are developmentally appropriate and enjoyable.

#### Learning Objectives:

- Participants will have the opportunity to explore the importance of play for a child's development.
- Participants will be shown how to create an environment to foster play and leisure
- Participants will be given information on actively guiding and facilitating play and leisure for the enjoyment of all children at the centre.

### The Importance of Play

Play gives children the opportunity to explore the world around them and learn how to cope in different environments. It gives them a chance to be creative and develop their own interests. Most importantly children do not have to fit into a certain mould to play.

Children's play can be enhanced by sensitive and aware adults who help children develop their potential by working with them, not by doing everything for them.

As vacation care workers we can provide a safe environment for children to play and help them learn new social, creative and physical skills, and improve on existing ones. We can also help children develop a positive self esteem and explore their own individual interests. Play is not only a child's work it is a child's right. It is giving them an opportunity to develop in a healthy and happy manner.

It is only play and leisure when:

It is freely chosen

It is pleasurable

It meets the children's interests

#### Activity 1

Take a moment to think about your own play or leisure experiences as a child. Briefly note down the things that you did and why you liked doing those things.



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## Benefits of Play and Leisure

Providing opportunities for children's play and leisure is one of the most important ways that we can provide for children's developmental needs and interests.

Play and leisure provides opportunities for children to:

- Explore
- Create
- Day dream
- Socialise
- Gain new interests
- Problem solve
- Try out different types of behaviour
- Develop self-confidence
- Increase physical ability
- Learn a new skill
- Expel energy
- Express thoughts and feelings
- And above all to have fun

## Types of Play/Leisure Experiences

There are many different ways to categorise the different kinds of play/leisure experiences. Remember the divisions are not clear and separate, as most good play activities will combine elements from many or all of the following categories:

**Sensory play** - uses some or all of our senses, including tasting, hearing, touching and looking.

**Constructive/Deconstructive play** - includes the construction and deconstruction of block structure, box constructions and cubby building. The child learns to put things together to make something new. They may also be interested in how these things can be dismantled or demolished. It is important that play materials can be altered and used in a variety of ways to allow experiment and change.

**Dramatic/Imaginative play** - involves pretending to act out a role. Dressing up, playing house, plays and acting out stories, fashion parades, masks, puppets and day-dreaming are all examples of imaginative play. Through this type of play children think for themselves, work out reactions and attempt to come to terms - their own terms with people and events.

**Exploratory play** - involves exploring the ways in which things work or what they look like close up. It may involve seeing what happens if you add one substance to another like in a science experiment or what happens when a plaster cast is released from a mould.

**Manipulative play** - involves any kind of physical play that may require concentrated effort in controlling small muscles and eye/hand coordination. Hama Beads are an example of this type of play.

**Active/Adventure play** - involves any kind of play that requires exertion, such as chasings, ball games, rough and tumble play. It involves developing skills in mobility, climbing, balancing, catching, throwing and riding a bike. Examples of adventure play would include tree climbing, obstacle courses and hill sliding.

**Creative play** - refers to the use of various media to express thoughts and feelings while creating, the child has an opportunity to find out about textures, weights, colours, balance - all of the basic facts of living in a particular environment. Creative play can include drawing, painting and sculpture, creating and moving to music.

## Creating the Environment

There are many types of play that we can select from to create child friendly environments to foster children's play and leisure. How do you decide what kind of play resources to select when setting up areas for different types of play?

Remember:

- ✓ Choose play types and select play resources that relate to the children's interests
- ✓ Select play equipment that is appropriate to the children's stage of development, so that it is safe, makes use of children's exiting skills and supports the development of new skills.
- ✓ Select play resources that reflect the diversity of children and families in terms of their cultural background, gender and individual abilities

### Activity 2

Outline some ways to assist you to select or choose various play types, equipment and resources for your vacation care program. Refer to the above points.

Think about how you could set up an area in vacation care to stimulate children's interest and exploration of a particular animal. Choose an 'animal experience' you think children may be interested in. State your reason why.

## Participating in the Play of Children

When is the last time you played? Was it in your childhood or adulthood? Did you roll down a hill? Play a game of tennis? Or were you assigned a role to play by the children in your vacation care program? Joining in children's play only when invited and following their cues makes sure that the children retain control of their play experiences.

Participating in children's play in a meaningful and respectful way, involves the following skills:

- Responding appropriately to an invitation from a child or children
- Collaborating with children
- Encouraging with children
- Encouraging the children to retain power and control in their play
- Taking responsibility for our own needs
- Pretending and using our imagination
- Conveying respect when departing from the play

### Activity 3

Reflect upon an experience of play where a group of children, including yourself, worked together to achieve something special.

Think about the different types of play outlined earlier. Are there any types of play that you particularly enjoy? Are there any types of play you particularly dislike? Record these. Reflect upon your attitudes and how they affect your interactions with children during different types of play.

Remember you don't have to enjoy all types of play but you do have the responsibility to ensure that all your interactions with children demonstrate interest and enthusiasm.

## **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

**Article 31** -The Child's Right to Play The child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities and to participate in cultural and artistic life. The State undertakes to provide appropriate and equal opportunities for the realisation of these rights.

## **Recommended Resource**

*Vacation Care Training and Resource Kit* available from Network

## **Useful publications available from Network**

see Network's website [www.netoosh.org.au](http://www.netoosh.org.au)

*Play Rights and Responsibilities*

*Play is Important*

*Growth and Development*