



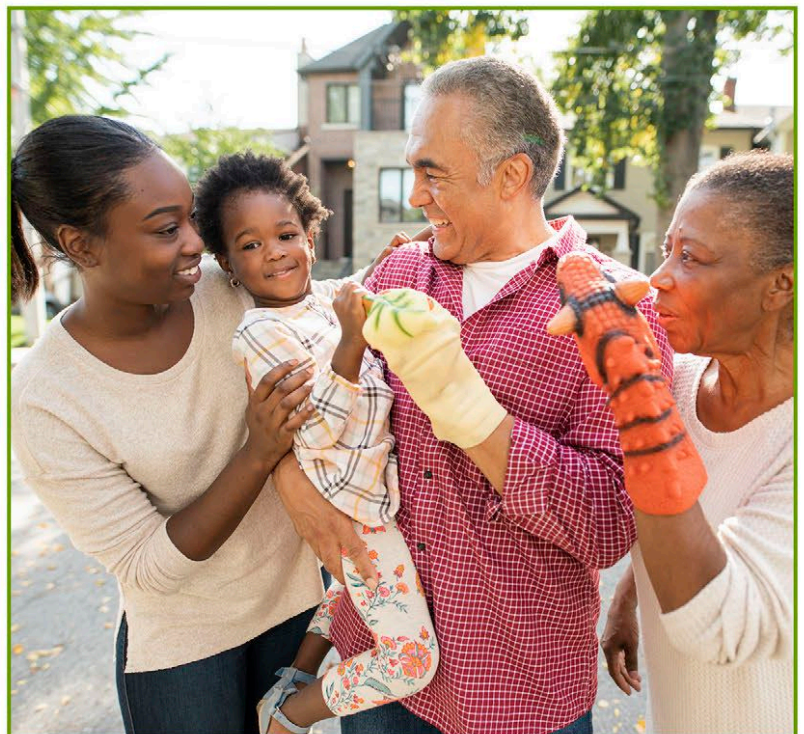
PLAY

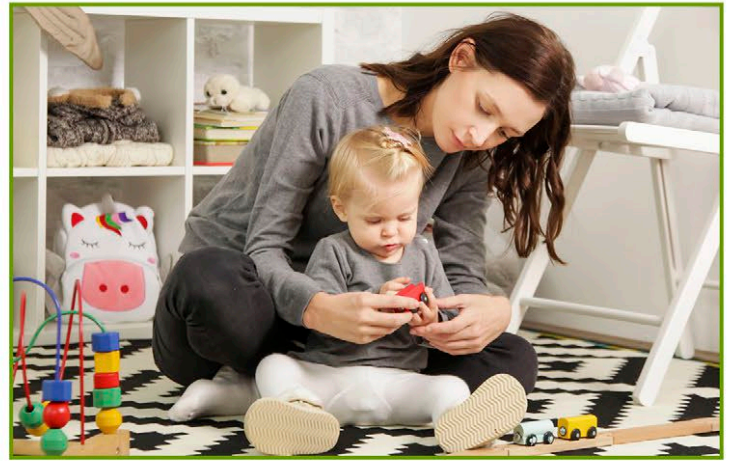
is how young children learn about the world. When children play, they learn how objects work, how people think, feel, and act, how to solve problems, think critically and creatively, share their thoughts and ideas, work well with others, and manage their emotions.

PLAY

is critical for healthy brain development. It literally helps to grow **BETTER** brains. Children who have opportunities to play everyday experience opportunities that create connections in the brain, helping brains grow stronger. How can **YOU**, as family members, help?

We need to understand how children's play works. There are two types: **Free Play and Guided Play.**





Characteristics of Free Play:

- Pleasurable. There is no goal. Children engage in it because it is FUN.
- Process oriented. Children set the pace and structure of the play.
- Involves active engagement; both thinking and physical movement.
- Involves make believe for children who are ready for that.

Free play means the children are playing by themselves. There is no structure or support. Children have total independence; the play is led by them. If you, as an adult join in, you are agreeing to do things their way. You are another actor in the story.

What the Research Says:

Research has found that guided play can enhance children's learning when adults:

- Provide children with materials that extend their play.
- Ask open ended questions about what the children are discovering, and opportunities for children to explain their thinking.
- Describe what they see their children doing.

The most optimal situation is for children to experience FREE PLAY and GUIDED PLAY every day.



SOURCES:

The Growing Brain. Zero to Three, 2018.