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26 June 2014

Dear Friends,

This week's newsflash focuses on why play is important in a child's development, both as a way to promote learning and as a way to deal with trauma. In the following resources, you can read more about the benefits of play, how to make toys from locally available materials, and activities to do with different ages of children to promote their healthy development.

We hope you enjoy this week's edition of the Newsflash!

Sincerely,

The Firelight Team

*(Article) The Child at Play by Angela Hough*

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(Article) The Child at Play

*By Angela Hough*

Play is something all children do – it helps them develop cognitively, emotionally and physically. And it's healthy, even for adults. Play can be games played by rules, fantasy or imaginative play, or a repetitive physical activity such as bouncing a ball. It differs according to age, developmental stage, context and cultural expectations. But all need to play and know how to engage in it.

### **Why is play important?**

All young animals play – it enhances their physical development, enabling the animal to practice skills such as hunting and fighting, while promoting social bonding and role learning. Humans are no different. Play is essential for your child's development because it contributes to his cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being. It is also the ideal opportunity for parents to engage fully with him while he guides the play.

### **Two examples: The language of play:**

- *Samantha is in Primary school. She is learning to read and write. Mostly she does well, but sometimes she feels out of her depth when learning new things. When she comes*

*home she plays school with her dolls. Samantha is the teacher and she teaches the dolls about reading and writing. Sometimes she gives them stars for doing well and sometimes she is angry if they don't say the words right.*

- *Thabo's father died in 2001, and his mother in 2005. He now lives with his aunt. When his teachers ask how he is, he says fine. In many ways he is fine. However in the playground Thabo is often found playing funerals with some of his other friends. His teacher is concerned about this. Although it can be sad that a child is playing funerals, it may be a healthy expression of his feelings.*

#### Play is a child's natural medium of expression:

Although your child cannot yet think in words, his non-verbal thinking began at birth. And play is the language through which he communicates and expresses his thoughts and feelings. It is a way of repeating, working out and mentally digesting what is happening in the world. Play provides a safe way to express emotional states and physical sensations - both positive and negative - without judgment. For example, feelings of aggression can be expressed in play, without causing pain, by having action figures fight.

#### Learning to make sense of the world:

Play is one of the most important ways in which a child learns and makes sense of the world. He tests his experiences by re-enacting ordinary experiences such as eating, sleeping and toilet training as well as more stressful experiences such as being sick, going to school, parental discipline and strong emotions. Through rehearsal, modeling and repeating stories and sensory experiences your child works to understand the external world and gain a sense of mastery over what happens. He develops a sense of being able to cope with real events by trying out events in a symbolic and miniature form without pressure from the adult world. So, playing funerals is Thabo's way of working out what happened at the funeral, how he felt and how other people - in this way, an upsetting event becomes less strange and scary. If this play is forbidden, these experiences may not be assimilated.

#### Mastery

Through play your child develops his capacity to move his body and work out his physical capabilities, while also practicing cognitive skills. For example, by repeatedly jumping across a stream, your child perfects distance perception, jumping and landing skills and balance. Through repetitive games such as peek-a-boo, your child learns to grasp the fact that objects exist even when not seen.

#### Role learning:

Play also enhances social bonding and role learning. Through pretend play a child repeats narratives, takes on various roles and tries out "new ways of being" to develop his personality. He develops the ability to think in terms of self and other, to guess or anticipate the thoughts of others and to develop empathy and understanding of others' feelings. Imaginative play provides a child with the opportunity of broadening these scripts, and gaining a sense of control over them.

Samantha plays different roles from school life. She practices what it is like being the teacher - the one in charge. Thabo works out what other people might have been feeling at the funeral and also what he was feeling.

As your child develops he takes on the roles of certain characters, and may reverse the roles, for example “ I am the doctor, you are the child” and then “I am the child, you are the doctor”. This teaches him about himself and his relationship to others and allows him to take on the attitude of others towards himself. Pretend games such as tea parties teach your child that what he thinks is not always what others think.

Undirected play allows children to learn how to work in groups, to share, to negotiate, to resolve conflicts, and to learn self-advocacy skills. He will practice decision-making skills, move at his own pace and discover his own areas of interest. When playing with your child allow him to lead or decide what to play – this will give him a chance to connect to you on his own territory, in a way he can direct, which will boost his self-esteem.

For the complete article visit: <http://bit.ly/1oMp1hr>

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(Resource) Early Childhood Development Kit: Guideline for Caregivers

*ECD Unit / ECD Emergency Task Force  
Programme Division, UNICEF New York, 2005*

## **PART 1: What Children Need: Essential Information for Caregivers in Emergency Situation**

### **1. Therapeutic Language: Talking with Children Exposed to Trauma**

A fundamental need of psychologically distressed and traumatized children is to help them connect emotionally with available adults. Communication has three main goals:

- to help children express their memories, feelings and thoughts,
- to help children gain a realistic understanding of what has happened,
- to enable children to cope better with activities of every day.

## **PART 2: Organizing activities with children**

### **1. Play as the foundation of learning**

Play is children's work and play is powerful for children because it is linked to learning, growth, and development. Play can influence the development of social competence, intelligence, language development and creativity. Play is a natural, universal experience that is grounded in everyday life processes. Throughout the world, children play alone and in groups, actively creating meaning and exploring their environment. Play serves to sustain the authenticity of culture, as play themes incorporate folktales, celebrations, special festivals, and other traditions. Play is central to children's learning, regardless of the actual content.

The process of play is a powerful, multifaceted learning experience.

## **2. What to Do**

Some activities are suggested in the Annex 1. To begin with, it is recommended that caregivers introduce the suggested activities. However, you can be always creative to facilitate any kinds of activities with children with consideration of their developmental stages and capacities.

The newborn is eager to explore the world with the senses. Looking at the child, talking and singing to the child, making facial expressions, and cuddling the child close help them come alive to the world during their wakeful period.

The first year of life centres on play through movement, listening to and making sounds, mimicking adults' facial expressions and gestures, and manipulating objects. Caregivers, simple items to hold, touch, taste, and explore are their favourite playthings.

One and two years old children like to sort things and try movement tasks like rolling a ball over an over. They still love to play with caregivers, and they like playing next to other children and imitating them.

Three to four years old children play most in the realm of the imagination. They love to make up stories and act them out with other children, using props, or to hear stories told or read by an older child or adult. They ask questions, love to draw and play with clay and crafts materials, sing, and dance. All these activities are better for them than formally structured learning at this age.

Five to six years old children can begin to learn formal reading, writing and number skills, but the foundation still needs to be play through interesting activities to explore and discover in order to preserve love and learning and maximize brain development.

## **3. Create the Environment**

Make sure the environment is "baby/children proof," to encourage free exploration. Remove any glass jars or items, cleaning fluids, cover electric wires (or tape them up), cover hard edges and corners of furniture, cover electric plugs, sweep the floor and make sure there are no small objects around, and make sure any medicine or toxic materials are out of children's reach. For outdoor play, be careful to secure a safe, clean space with adequate supervision. All climbing equipment should be sturdy, with space for running. Provide a space with shade and water for drinking, if possible. Be sure that all children can be seen and not hidden by trees, etc., so that supervision can be effective. Bring a medical kit, or plan for any medical problems in advance.

Play spaces should be designed to serve all children, with several different play activities so that a limited number of children can play in each play activity during playtime. Essential for children's learning and growth, play should be the daily work of children. Areas for dramatic

play, art, constructions (blocks) and manipulative games should be filled with age-appropriate play materials. Additionally, an outdoor play space should provide ample room for climbing, running, swings and other outdoor play activities.

#### **4. Create the daily programme for children**

Children are more secure in a place that has a consistent schedule; where they can tell what comes next and count on it. This way, they are free to move, explore, and learn without hesitation or fear of being interrupted.

Try to create the daily schedule that has:

- Time for routines (e.g. to eat, rest, wash, toilet)
- Time for transition from one activity to another
- Time for free play
- Time for group activity
- Opportunities for both inside and outside play

#### **5. Practicing Discipline –Avoiding Punishment**

Direct the child toward the actions to be encouraged and help the child learn to think situations through and make wise choice.

### **PART 3: How to make play materials with locally available resources**

The complete resource shows how to make toys from available materials and in the annex provides 27 activities for different age groups.

To view the whole resource, visit: <http://uni.cf/SWSxSq>

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(Call for Concept Notes) The Civil Society Development Fund for South Africa

The Civil Society Development Fund (run by the Embassy of France in South Africa) invites South African Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to submit Concept Notes and the first column of logical framework to get the Fund's support for capacity development. Applicants for selected concept notes will be invited to submit full proposals.

Funding Priorities:

- Improving local governance, public participation access to basic services with a specific focus on sustainable development of communities and social cohesion.
- Promoting respect for human rights, especially those of women, children and LGBTI persons.

Grant allocation will be made for up to €40,000 per project to implement the project for 18 months duration. The grant will be up to 70% of the total budget of the project. Applying

organization must contribute at least 10% of the total project budget.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Applicant organizations must be based in South Africa region.
- Applicants can be registered non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions (including think-tanks), faith-based organizations, community-based organizations and trade unions.
- Applicants must have at least 5 years experience in the sector.
- Applicants must have sustainable and stable foundations in terms of finance, human resources and project management.
- Organizations currently funded by the CSDF are not eligible to apply for 2014 grants.

**Deadline: 7 July 2014**

For more information, please visit: <http://bit.ly/1nm4rhg>

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(Accepting Proposals) African Women's Development Fund for Organizations working on Women Empowerment in Africa

Organizations working on Women Empowerment in Africa can send application to African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) for institutional capacity-building and program development. The AWDF supports local, national, sub-regional and regional organizations in Africa with the grant money to strengthen their organizational capacity.

Thematic Areas:

- Women's Human Rights
- Reproductive Health and Rights
- HIV/AIDS
- Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods
- Governance, Peace and Security
- Arts, Culture and Sports

Grant request can be made in between \$5000 – \$50,000. Grants over \$20,000 are made to only the organizations that operate on a regional basis.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Applicant can be local, national, sub-regional or regional African women's organizations, from any part of Africa.
- Applicants must be led and managed by women and in existence for at least three years.

- National or regional civil society organizations with women in their governance can apply for women-specific project that will be managed by a senior woman in the organization.
- The proposed project must demonstrate how it fits into organization's overall strategy for the area of work or community in which it is located.
- Applicants must demonstrate how their work fits into either a local, national or regional strategy for the empowerment of African women. They should have demonstrated capacity in leadership, planning and networking.
- The proposed project must have clear evaluation and sustainability plan.
- Applicant must have potential to raise additional fund and the ability to manage funds and fund accounts in a transparent manner.
- Grant application guidelines must be followed and the application must be made in one of the thematic areas mentioned above.
- Applications can be submitted in English, French, or Portuguese via email, fax or post.

**Deadline:** Ongoing (award grants three times per year)

For more information, please visit: <http://bit.ly/1d0d7X2>

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As part of the Firelight Foundation's Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides "Newsflashes" to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website:

<http://www.firelightfoundation.org/resources/newsflash>

We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at [newsletter@firelightfoundation.org](mailto:newsletter@firelightfoundation.org)

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