Play and Special Time with Children

One of the most enjoyable and important aspects of parenting is spending time at play with your children. Parent-child play is not only enjoyable, it also helps children learn and develop and is a great way to get to know their world. Here are some tips from the Parents Plus Children's Programme on how best to play with your children.

1 Set aside a special time

Build a routine around playtime with your children. Short, daily playtimes of fifteen to twenty minutes can make a real difference.

2 Spend one-on-one time with children

One-to-one time with each of your children is the best way to get to know them individually and to build a bond together. Even if this is a short time (ten minutes reading/chat before bed) it can make a difference.

3 Choose interactive, imaginative activities

The best toys and activities allow children to be active and creative and allow parent and child to do things together and most importantly to talk to one another.

4 Follow the child's lead

Rather than taking over, encourage your children to lead in play – this builds their confidence and learning. Let your child choose the activity and follow their ideas.

5 Be a good audience

Show your interest in your child's ideas and activities. Use comments rather than asking too many questions, "I see you are driving the big truck", "You picked the green pencil."

6 Encourage Children in Play

It's easy to fall into the trap of correcting children when they play. For special playtime, go out of your way to encourage your child, looking for things they are doing right.

Parents Plus is an Irish charity that develops practical, evidence-based parenting and mental health programmes. We train professionals working with children and families to deliver the programmes in communities and clinical settings. Our programmes support families to communicate effectively, build satisfying relationships and overcome emotional and behavioural problems. Parents wishing to attend a Parents Plus course should contact local services such as their Primary Care Team, Family Resource Centre, Mental Health Service, School or Childcare Committee who may have more information. www.parentsplus.ie.