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**Comfort Play
& Teach:**

A Positive Approach to Parenting™

Every Day

Comfort, Play & Teach™ Tip Sheet: Cooking with Your Child

Cooking is an activity that toddlers and preschoolers can enjoy. The following **Comfort, Play & Teach™** tips provide ways to share with children the comforting power of foods, the fun of creating a meal, the science of cooking and how to prepare and enjoy healthy foods.



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- Turn a weekend morning into something special by making breakfast with your child. Include her favourite breakfast foods along with those of other family members. This lets her know you notice what is important to her.
- Prepare hot chocolate in the evening and savour it together while talking or reading a book. This lets you both unwind and share a relaxing moment.
- Ask your child to help you with simple tasks in the kitchen. This will show him that his contribution is valued and build his confidence and self-esteem.



Play

- Let your child express and develop her creativity. For example, invent a new recipe together and serve it to the whole family.
- Place small amounts of different ingredients such as flour, sugar, vanilla extract and jam into small containers. Encourage each other to guess the contents by exploring the variety of smells, tastes and textures.
- Together, make meals more attractive and fun by arranging food in playful shapes and configurations that you can then enjoy eating together.



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- Demonstrate basic science concepts through cooking. For example, ask your child to notice how water changes from soft to hard when it is frozen or how butter melts when it is heated.
- Encourage healthy eating habits by cooking wholesome foods with your child and explaining what foods are rich in the things that are good for our bodies such as vitamins, proteins and minerals.
- Teach your child about counting and quantities. When making pancakes, count the number of eggs that are added, how many teaspoons of baking powder are needed and how many cups of milk are stirred in.

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**Comfort, Play & Teach™ Tip Sheet:
Make the Most of Bedtime or Anytime by Reading to Your Child**

One of childhood's most rich experiences is being read to, as this encourages healthy development in a number of ways. The following **Comfort, Play & Teach™** tips can help you make the most of storytime with your child.



Comfort

- Spend some special one-to-one reading time with your child. Storytime encourages snuggling and allows babies and young children to bond with you by feeling your warmth and listening to the comforting sound of your voice.
- Help your child to deal with real life issues through books. For example, reading and discussing a story about a child who is going to a new child care centre, who has just lost a pet or had a fight with a friend can be comforting to your child. She will see that others have gone through the same situation and learn new ways to cope.



Play

- Read books that are hands-on. Let your baby explore cloth books with his fingers and mouth. Offer your toddler or preschooler interactive books that invite her to pull tabs, touch and feel textures, hear sound effects or lift peek-a-boo flaps.
- Escape into an imaginary world. As you read, allow your child to explore her imagination and delight in fantastic and whimsical illustrations that turn storytime into playtime.

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- Enhance your child's pre-literacy skills. Teach your preschooler to recognize letters and the corresponding sounds. Seek out these letters in books. Soon he'll seek out these letters on his own, noticing them on signs, packaging and license plates.
- Learn about new places without leaving home. Reading books is a good way to teach your child about places and experiences that may otherwise be inaccessible. Books can introduce children to the ocean, outer space, far away countries and cultures, and open their minds to new ideas.

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Comfort, Play & Teach™ Tip Sheet: Enjoying Music with Your Infant, Toddler or Preschooler

Whether you are singing together, listening to your favourite recordings, creating sound makers or looking at books, music can contribute so much to your child's growth and well-being. Here are some ideas to try with your infant, toddler or preschooler that encourage you to share songs and rhymes and **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time!



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- Singing lullabies to your child or doing fingerplays like *'Five Little Monkeys'* are wonderful ways to touch your child, both emotionally and physically. Making music together invites cuddling and creates bonds of affection.
- Music can soothe a child or bring a smile. Don't hesitate to add familiar songs and nursery rhymes to daily routines like diapering, feeding or sleep time. They are calming and make these experiences more loving and interactive.



Play

- Why not play your favourite music and dance with your child? You can salsa or waltz, limbo or line dance... add some scarves and pretend to be belly dancers! Moving to music encourages physical co-ordination and imagination as you respond to its rhythms and make up steps together.
- You and your child can create instruments from household things. Pie plates are super cymbals. A plastic bottle with water or rice in it makes a fine shaker. An ice cream container and two wooden spoons can beat out lively tunes! The sweetest sounds can come from instruments we make ourselves.

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- The simplest songs and rhymes can teach musical concepts such as *beat*, *tempo* and *rhythm*. Babies and toddlers can experience these things physically when parents do knee bounces like 'To Market, To Market'. Older children are more capable of keeping the beat with instruments like shakers as they recite the rhyme.
- Keep an ear out for concerts in your community. Often there are free events where young children can hear different musical styles and see what is involved in performing. Concerts can open up a world of music to them and even spark interest in becoming musicians, conductors, singers, composers, reviewers....

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Comfort, Play & Teach™ Tip Sheet: Gardening with Your Infant, Toddler or Preschooler

Spring time offers a perfect opportunity to spend time outdoors with your infant, toddler or preschooler and to enjoy some **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time noticing all of the beautiful buds and blossoms. Here are some activities you can do to truly enjoy a wonderful spring time.



Comfort

- Take a walk with your infant or toddler and encourage her to notice the changes in the ground, on the trees and in the sky. Talk to her about what is in her world (e.g., buds on trees, birds singing, rain gently falling or the smell of spring flowers). Your special attention will help her interest in nature begin to blossom.
- Read books to your preschooler like *One Bean* by Anne Rockwell or *Planting a Rainbow* by Lois Ehlert. Together you can look at the pictures and ask questions about where seeds come from and how plants grow. Your child can proudly share how much she knows already about plants and colours while learning new things with you!



Play

- If planting a garden or window box, encourage your infant or toddler to participate using her different senses. Hold up a flower so your baby can smell it. Invite your toddler to poke her finger in the dirt and plant a seed. Describe what you are doing and name the tools you are using or the colours of each different plant. There is so much to learn just by looking, listening, touching and smelling!
- Whether you live in a house or apartment, your preschooler can garden! Look at catalogues together. Show your child different plants to choose from - does he like flowers or vegetables or herbs? Let your child decide where his selection should be planted in the garden, or which spot on the windowsill is the best! Then go out and buy all you need to begin your garden together.

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- When you cook, use different kinds of plants – leafy lettuce, carrots from under the ground and tomatoes from plants above the ground. Try adding herbs like chives or dill. Talk to your baby or toddler about each plant – their shapes, their colours, their textures, their tastes and smells. This will introduce him to many new words related to plants and gardening.
- Your child can learn lots about how plants grow and what plants need (e.g., sunlight and water). By caring for a plant or garden, she can watch the sequence in which seeds grow into plants. She can make discoveries about what happens when plants get too much or too little light or water. Gardening can help your child develop skills like observing and problem-solving.

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Comfort, Play & Teach™ Tip Sheet: Involving Your Infant, Toddler or Preschooler in Caring about the Environment

Young children are naturally curious about what they see in their world, asking questions about the weather, animals, plants and stones. It is never too early to develop your child's understanding of the earth and the living creatures that share it with us. Here are some **Comfort, Play & Teach™** tips that will encourage parents to explore and appreciate the environment with their infant, toddler or preschooler.



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- You and your infant or toddler can visit parks, gardens or other natural spots near where you live. Is there a beach, a forest or a marshy area to explore? Talk about the different things that you can see such as birds, trees, plants, insects or animals. This will help your child to learn about what is around him and to feel safe and comfortable as he experiences the natural world.
- Consider getting a small pet (such as a goldfish or hamster), or planting a garden or indoor terrarium. Your preschooler can participate in caring for a living thing as she notices different parts of its life cycle, and spend quality time sharing her questions with you. What she learns from caring for her own pet or plant could one day affect her feelings about endangered species or deforestation.



Play

- Play recordings of music that include nature sounds such as waves lapping, rain falling, birds singing or insects chirping. You can dance with your baby as you enjoy the gentle sounds, or provide your toddler with colourful scarves or squares of tissue paper to express his response to the music and sounds in creative ways.
- Make your own toys and craft materials together using recyclable materials and beautiful junk. Musical instruments can be made from empty ice cream containers, paper towel rolls and aluminum pie pans. Create beautiful collages using old magazines, flyers and scraps like onion bags and bottle tops. Your preschooler will discover new uses for old things as he plays and creates!

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- Take your infant or toddler to the library and sign out age-appropriate magazines published by various wildlife organizations. There are some wonderful materials designed to introduce the youngest children to nature concepts through photographs and simple text that will encourage their curiosity and their emerging literacy skills.
- Read books with your preschooler such as *The Great Kapok Tree* by Lynne Cherry and *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss. This will provide an excellent opportunity for your child to learn about how some things that people do can be harmful to the earth and to think about how we might treat the environment with more care and respect.

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