



Topic Tuesday

PLAY

Play should be *Self-Directed*
Self-Initiated
Child-led

JOYFUL-BEGINNINGS.ORG

Welcome to:

Joyful



BEGINNINGS



Joyful Beginnings is an online community providing support, resources, and a sense of belonging to all those who share their lives with young children, pre-birth to age three.

At Joyful Beginnings parents benefit from the knowledge and expertise of experienced Early Childhood Educators, but more importantly they can learn from and lean on each other.

Joyful Beginnings offers a safe space to learn about and share simple, natural, and joyful ways to care for young children.

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1

*Introduction
to:*
PLAY

PLAY IS THE WORK OF CHILDHOOD

Children learn about their world through play. Not only is it important for social and emotional development, play has also been shown to be critical to brain development and is considered to be the foundation for future academic learning as well. What may look to the adult as simple fun, is a very vital part of childhood and has long-range impacts throughout the rest of life. Best part is, play comes naturally to children and we don't need to do anything other than let them experience the world around them and explore their environment!



2

**SELF-DIRECTED
PLAY**

WHERE TO START?

Children are naturally playful, joyful, and curious! All we as parents and caregivers need to do is set up a safe environment, provide simple, open-ended materials and let children explore! It can often feel like there is a need to set up or facilitate play in some way for children, but this is not the case. The best play is self-initiated, self-directed, and child-led. We don't need to instruct them, coach them, or be overly involved. Even when joining your child in play, just follow their lead and see where they take you! And don't forget to have fun yourself!



3

**PLAY THROUGH
THE AGES AND
STAGES**



Stages of *Play*

0-3
Months

"Unoccupied" Play

- Learning about and discovering how their body moves
- Delight in the discovery of hands and feet
- Interested in their surrounding, especially the voices and faces of adults and others in their environments

0-2
Years

"Solitary" Play

- Child plays alone, engage in a solitary activity- could be alongside adults or other children
- Play is based in the toys/objects around them and in exploring and learning about their environment

2
Years

"Spectator/Onlooker"
Play

- Children observe others in their environment and imitate what they see in their play
- Through play, an understanding of the world is built through recreating what they see and experience

2+
Years

"Parallel" Play

- Play is alongside or near others, but the child is not necessarily directly engaged with others

3-4
Years

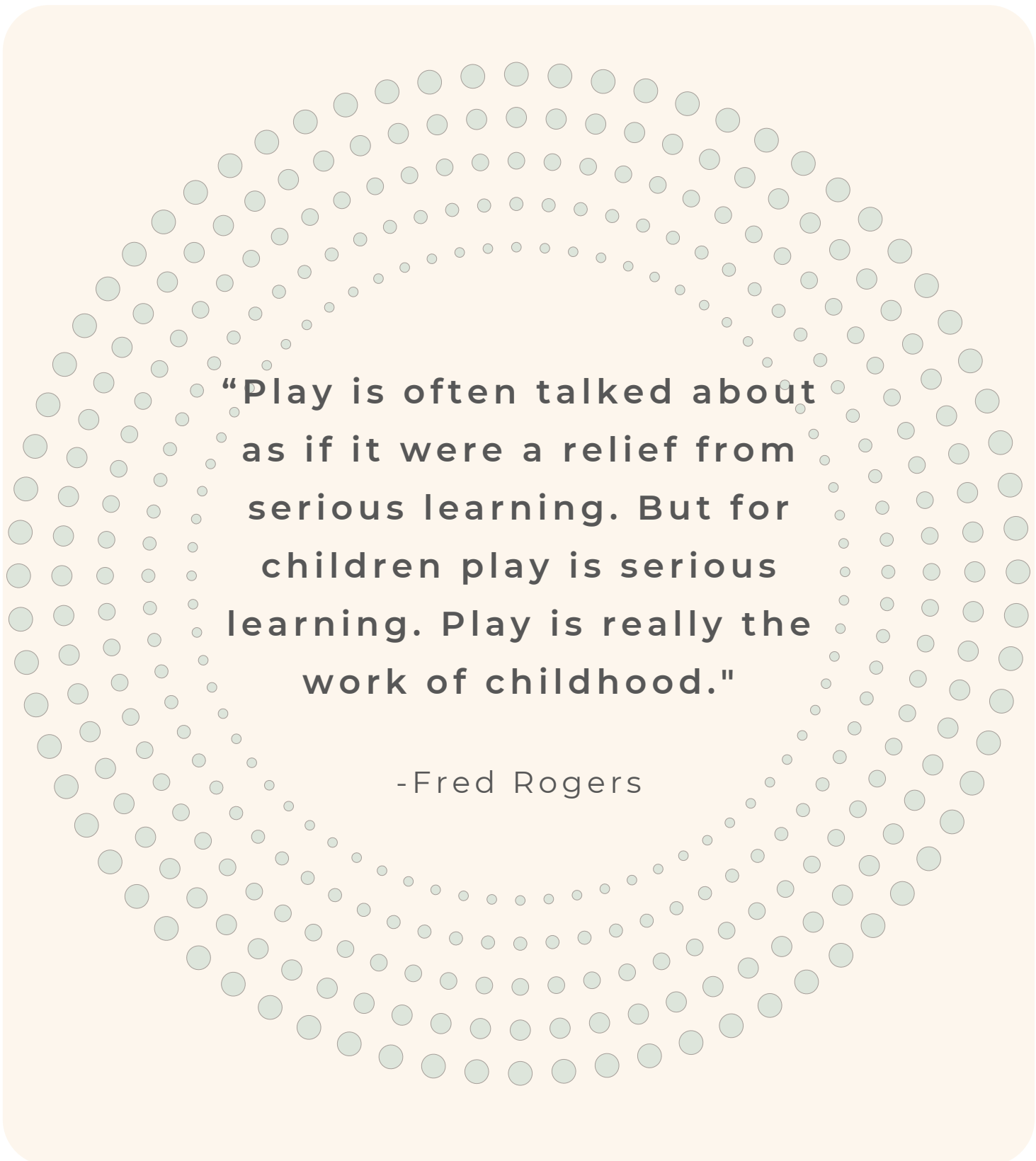
"Associate" Play

- Child becomes interested in others and playing with them
- Play is still not organized or coordinated

4+
Years

"Cooperative"
Play

- The child is interested in and plays with others
- Focused more on an "activity"
- This is also when more "imaginative" play starts to emerge



**“Play is often talked about
as if it were a relief from
serious learning. But for
children play is serious
learning. Play is really the
work of childhood.”**

-Fred Rogers

RESOURCES



Links

Articles:

[Thoughts on the Play of Young Children](#)
[Self-Initiated Play for Children](#)

Joyful Beginnings Podcast
[The Importance of Play](#)

Book
[Children at Play](#)
(Available on Amazon)

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