

Play in a Hospital

Hospitalization can be an upsetting event in anybody's life, especially a child's.

We all strive to minimize the detrimental effects and trauma that hospitalization can have on a child. One of the main goals of child life is to normalize the hospital environment. The best way to do this is to provide children with as much opportunity to play as possible. You are there to provide emotional support during procedures. To provide the child with a sense of control over a seemingly uncontrollable situation. Facilitating support through medical events and /or invasive procedures. Distractions, coping strategies, and relaxation are used thus enhancing optimal benefits.

Piaget said, "Play is the work of a child".

The Value of Play

Children learn about the world through play. In hospitals where children feel particularly vulnerable, expressive play activities help them understand what is happening and provide opportunities to gain a sense of control.

Activities

Supplying small toys, games, coloring, music, age appropriate books, crafts, videos, and Nintendo games provide stimulation and comfort.

Choices in what toy to play with, serves to empower the child and give them a sense control. This is especially needed when so much health care treatment is not freely chosen. When a child rejects an activity, he has been allowed to experience some control. (This can be especially satisfying in settings where so much seems to be done to children.)

- Imaginative play allows imitation, critique, commentary, and trying out of adult roles. The child has a chance to play the doctors and nurses. Especially fascinated to give play shots. It can also reveal a child's frequently accurate and humorous perspective on adult behaviors.
- Provides opportunities for socialization.
- Can be a pleasant diversion from worry and stress.
- Mastering a game, skill, or art project can provide a sense of accomplishment.
- Arts and crafts made for self, family; friends enable pride in creativity. If a child is able to play like at home helps them to feel like normal children again.

Functions of Play in a Health Care Settings

- Allows a child freedom of choice. This is especially needed when so much health care treatment is not freely chosen. When a child rejects an activity, he has been allowed to experience some control.
- Encourages engagement in activities, which are personally satisfying.
- Permits control have and manipulation of materials (this can be especially satisfying in settings where so much sees to be done to children.)
- Allows a safe acting out of aggressive and hostile feelings. Feelings are facts. Safe expression in plays helps release tension and can also reveal a child's misconceptions about treatment and care. Professional staff can intervene appropriately.
- Imaginative play allows imitation, critique, commentary, and trying out of adult roles. It can also reveal a child's frequently accurate and humorous perspective on adult behaviors.
- Provides opportunities for socialization. Can be a pleasant diversion from worry and stress.
- Mastering a game, skill, or art project can provide a sense of accomplishment.
- Arts and crafts made for self, family; friends enable pride in creativity.
- Observing, exploring and manipulating materials are the beginning of scientific inquiry.

Coping Strategies

Common choices

- Sitting on caregivers lap
- Turning head the other way
- Watching the procedure
- Having detailed descriptions of procedure given first
- Holding or squeezing a caregivers hand
- Talking with someone to divert attention
- Watching a picture on the ceiling
- Concentrating on soothing divisional objects (magic wand, mobile, mural)
- Watching someone blow bubbles
- Listening to music
- Crying (giving permission to respond naturally)
- Cognitive challenges (counting backward, reciting a poem, spelling bee)
- Gentle breathing or blowing the feeling away
- Listening to a story
- Using positive imagery (thinking soothing, relaxing places, pleasant memories)

Age Appropriate Distraction During a Painful Procedure

- Infant - Bubbles, soft music, holding and talking by a familiar caregiver
- Toddler - Music, books, Pin wheels, bubbles (Blow away pain), View Masters
- Preschool - Guided Imagery, View Master, books, hand held toys
- School Aged - Hand held video games, music through headphones, talking through the procedure, deep breathing exercises
- Adolescent - Music, talking, book or magazine, hand held video games *Speed card game*

Always be truthful in telling the child what you are going to do before you do it.

Even infants need these verbal cues.

Provide positive reinforcements for good behaviors.

"You are laying so still", or "I can tell you are trying to hold really still." "It's OK to cry, you just need to hold still."

Provide a reward for getting it done.

No drinks before exam.

Do not ~~wipe~~ after urinating

Stay at child's head only - don't contaminate evidence

If need to urinate, use sample jar, have mother help child

The Starfish Story



A man saw an old woman stooped over on a beach covered with starfish. He asked her what she was doing, to which she replied, "I am throwing the starfish back into the sea - if I don't, they will dry up and die." Laughing, the man said, "But Old Woman, there are so many starfish on the beach, you can't possibly make a difference."

She picked up a starfish and threw it back into the sea. Then looking at the man, she said, "I just did to that one."

The next day, the old woman visited the beach to check on the starfish. She saw the same man and his children throwing the starfish back into the sea. "Hello, Old Woman," he said with a twinkle in his eyes. "We are here to make a difference to a few more starfish."

There are hundreds of variations of this lovely little [starfish story](#) on the web.

It is a good reminder that we can't solve a problem just easily if you want your actions to be consequential. But if enough of us do, it can't just be another person, then collectively, we can impact the world.

"A child is only a child once, make their memories happy ones!" (Peeling Away the Pain)



No one is looking for her, and
 Even if they were, how can
 They call her if they don't
 Even know her name?
 Although she has claim
 She is not claimed.

Toni Morrison