

As the chart below demonstrates, there are many similarities in the benefits of intergenerational play for children and adults.

| | YOUNG CHILDREN | OLDER ADULTS |
|-----------|--|--|
| COGNITIVE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase flexibility in thinking (imagination; symbolic representation) • Make new connections of meaning • Gain concrete experience with visual/spatial, & mathematical relationships • Solve problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise flexibility in thinking (imagination, creativity) • Make new connections of meaning (critical thinking) • Recognize surprises; alter ideas & habits (expectations are challenged) • Solve problems |
| SOCIAL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express ideas and negotiate with peers (language development) • Learn what is acceptable language and behavior in the culture • Learn to share, compromise, respond to others • Make friends | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express ideas and articulate convincing arguments • Share perspectives based on life experiences • Learn to adapt and change • Make new friends and keep the old |
| PHYSICAL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice and consolidate small and gross motor skills • Oxygenate & stimulate blood flow to the brain • Gain concrete experience with relationships of weight, size, distance, etc. • Increase control over tools and materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise small and large muscles • Oxygenate & stimulate blood flow to the brain • Maintain a measure of control over the physical world |
| EMOTIONAL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interact with others and learn to express feelings appropriately • Work through emotionally charged experiences • Experiment with new roles for self • Learn to show empathy • Build self esteem | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interact with others and express feelings (combat depression) • Review life (integrity vs. despair) • Imagine new roles for self (growth) • Express empathy (give love or perish) • Build self esteem¹² |



WHY INTERGENERATIONAL PLAY?

Children and adults who play together discover a world beyond themselves,⁴ engendering respect for each individual's knowledge, strengths and values.⁵ Both learning and enjoyment soar as they play.

Research shows that children who play with adults demonstrate greater creativity and higher levels of language and problem solving skills than when playing solely with other children.⁶ Additionally, infant and toddler play is more sophisticated with adult partners.⁷ Engaging with adults supports optimal cognitive and social-emotional development.⁸

"You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation."

Plato, Greek philosopher

For older adults, play has psychological and health benefits, reducing stress, promoting relaxation, and giving perspective to the demands of life.⁹ Building and maintaining relationships via play is associated with better mental health, less disease and disability, and increased survival.¹⁰ During play, intergenerational shared site facilities observe positive changes in mood and higher engagement even among frail elders.¹¹

Additional Resources

- » **Play Is Forever: Benefits of Intergenerational Play.** (Internet). Available: <http://gu.org/RESOURCES/LearningActivities/IntergenerationalLearningGeography.aspx>
- » **Why Older-Adult Playgrounds Present A World Of Possibilities** by Marilyn Larkin. May/June Issue 2012, of **The Journal on Active Aging**
- » **Play Across the Human Life Cycle** by Nell, Drew, Klugman, Jones, Cooper & Prescott in **Play, Policy & Practice Connections**. Volume XII, Issue 2, 2010
- » **Should Cities Have Playgrounds for Adults?** Wellington City Council New Zealand discussion and report in **stuff.co.nz** by Sophie Speer, 9/6/2012
- » **Intergenerational Playgrounds.** (Internet). Available: http://prezi.com/bn_0gckalprl/intergenerational-fully-accessible-playgrounds
- » **Wild Zones** by David Hawkins and Karen Payne. (Internet). Available: http://www.wild-zone.net/assets/docs/WildZones_ConceptPaper_R1
- » **Jungfernheide Park Slideshow Gallery.** (Internet). Available: <http://inhabitat.com/berlins-jungfernheide-park-lets-you-climb-along-centenarian-treetops-at/>



Citations

- 1 Fromberg, D. & Bergen, D. (Eds.), (1998). *Play from birth to twelve: Contexts, perspectives, and meanings*. NY: Garland Press, p. 236.
- 2 Fromberg, D. & Bergen, D. (Eds.), 1998. p. 236.
- 3 Heracleous, L & Jacobs, C. (2005). *The Serious Business of Play*. MIT Management Sloan Review, 47(1), 19-20.
- 4 Davis, L., Larkin, E. & Graves, S. (2002). *Intergenerational play and learning*. International Journal of Early Childhood, 34(2), 42-49.
- 5 Fromberg, D. & Bergen, D. (Eds.), 1998. p. 297.
- 6 National Toy Council – *Intergenerational Play, Toys and Children*. (Internet). Available: http://www.btha.co.uk/pdfs/intergenerational_play.pdf
- 7 Fromberg, D. & Bergen, D. (Eds.), 1998. p. 283.
- 8 Fromberg, D. & Bergen, D. (Eds.), 1998. p. 284.
- 9 National Toy Council. 10 Ostrir, G.V., Ottenbacher, K.J. & Maarkides, K. S. (2004). *Onset of Frailty in Older Adults And the Protective Role of Positive Affect*. Journal of Psychology and Aging, 19(3), 402-408.
- 10 Jarrott, Shannon, et al. (2007). *Tried and True: A Guide to Successful Intergenerational Activities at Shared Site Programs*. Washington, DC: Generations United.