



# Play: The Building Blocks of Development and Connection

## In-Service Training

### Course Description

Taking this course will empower caregivers with the knowledge and skills to support the play needs of children and youth who have experienced neglect and abuse. Caregivers will explore the critical role of play in development, focusing on how trauma impacts a child or youth's ability to engage in and benefit from play. Through playful activities, participants will learn how play builds the brain, fosters relationship connections, and equips children and youth with essential life tools.

### Learning Objectives

From this session you will be able to:

- Explain how play supports the development of relationship bonds, self-regulation, and executive function for children and youth.
- Recognize how trauma influences a child or youth's ability to engage in and benefit from play.
- Adapt play activities to meet the unique developmental, emotional, and relational needs of children and youth in their care.
- Identify and address challenges related to play, ensuring it remains safe and supportive.

### Key Messages

- Research shows that play:
  - Encourages positive social interactions, cooperation, and conflict resolution skills that reduce bullying and exclusionary behaviours.
  - Enhances attention.
  - Reinforces positive behaviour responses.
  - Makes it easier for children to transition.
- Learning through play is faster than traditional repetition.
- Play builds and strengthens brain connections.
- Play supports learning, fosters brain development, and helps children and youth navigate their world and interact with others.
- Play is also a powerful way to incorporate their culture into daily life.
- Children and youth in care may not know how to play or may play differently than other children because they have experienced trauma. They may require additional supports, guidance, supervision and scaffolding in their play

### Guided Discussion Questions

1. How do you currently (or intend to) incorporate more playfulness into your caregiving approach? What impact has this had (or do you anticipate having) on the children/youth in your care?
2. Share some ways in which you are using play to promote healthy development with children in your home.

## Resources

**Resource one: Screen Time and Young Children – Canadian Paediatric Society**

Link- [https://caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/behavior-and-development/screen-time-and-young-children?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/behavior-and-development/screen-time-and-young-children?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

**Resource two: Children and Physical Activity – Government of Canada**

Link- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/being-active/children-physical-activity.html>

**Resource three: Neufeld Institute**

Link- <https://neufeldinstitute.org/>

**Resource four: First Nations Health Authority- Growing up Healthy**

Link- <https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/growingup.pdf>