

4<sup>th</sup> of June, 2020



# YOUTH, CHILDREN & FAMILIES CORNER

## Hello parents, caregivers and carers,

Welcome to the third edition of our Holyoake newsletter.

In this edition we are focusing on the wonderful topic of Play. Across all our children’s programs at Holyoake (Child Parent Relationship Training, Young People’s Program, and Attachment, Art & Play), play is an integral aspect of the work we do with children and families. We are committed to supporting caregivers to experience play as a way in which they can relate to, and connect with, their children whilst supporting their emotional, developmental and physical wellbeing.

In this newsletter we explore what play really is for children, and the function play has in times of crisis. Importantly, play is also something that allows children to see the world through different lenses. When children play characters and access different selves within their imaginations, they are developing an understanding of the perspectives and experiences of others. This is a vital part of developing empathy - the ability to be with others in their emotional experiences.

Empathy is something the world needs more of right now. Last week at Holyoake we celebrated Reconciliation Week and recognized National Sorry Day. We took the opportunity to draw on the expertise of our Aboriginal colleagues and to think about how we can contribute towards reconciliation, which is defined as *“strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, for the benefit of all Australians”* ([www.reconciliation.org.au/what-is-reconciliation/](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/what-is-reconciliation/)).

We acknowledge that at home here in Australia and in the world at large, there are huge social inequalities that work against the health of First Nations People. We would like our clients who have suffered as a result of these injustices to know that our hearts and minds are with you. We are committed to addressing these inequalities and assisting all of our families to thrive. We aim to do this by providing an equitable service that respects clients’ cultural ways, spiritual beliefs and personal communication styles. We also consider issues that may prevent people from accessing our programs – such as language barriers.

Sending all our best,

*Trin, Claudia and Emma*



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<https://www.lcslandscapes.com.au/nature-play-3/>

*“Birds fly,  
fish swim  
and children  
play.”*

- Garry Landreth

## Therapist Focus: Play

Play is such a massive but fundamental topic when it comes to children. There is no doubt that play is essential - so much so that the United Nations convention recognises play as a human right during childhood!

We know from childhood experts across multiple fields that play is the way in which children connect to others, create meaning, channel emotions and communicate their needs and inner world. Playing helps children stay physically and mentally well. It is an everyday part of a healthy and happy childhood.

*“Play is the way that children learn what no one can teach them. It is the way they explore and orient themselves to the actual world of space and time, of things, animals, structures and people. By engaging in the process of play, children learn to live our world of meanings and values, at the same time exploring and experimenting and learning in their own individual ways.”*  
(L. Frank)

- **Play** is enjoyable, spontaneous, voluntary and is key to children’s happiness
- **Play** helps children’s physical, mental and emotional health and well-being
- **Play** boosts children’s resilience, supporting them to cope with stress, anxiety and challenges
- **Play** supports children to develop confidence, creativity and problem-solving skills
- **Play** contributes to children’s learning and brain development
- **Play** promotes the development of concentration and attention, language skills, facilitates gaining perspective and memory

### SOME LINKS TO INSPIRE PLAY WITH YOUR CHILD

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<http://ipaworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/APC3-Thinking-about-your-childs-play.pdf>

<http://ipaworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/APC7-Things-to-play-with-around-your-home.pdf>

<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/using-play-to-support-children-during-covid-19/>



<https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age/play-media-technology>

## Play and Crisis

### Play in times of crisis and uncertainty?

Play is just as, if not more, important during times of crisis and uncertainty. It can help children to manage their emotions and give them a sense of normality and reassurance when things are difficult, strange or confusing. Just as some adults can find adapting to life's challenges... challenging, some children also find this more difficult than others. You may also notice changes in their behaviour as they grapple with the changes in their world. In times of uncertainty some children may require more support than others.

During this current crisis you can support your child's health, happiness and development by finding ways to incorporate play into every day. Making time for you and your child to play together may also strengthen your relationship and be good for *your* own emotional health.

### Play during a crisis helps by

- Keeping children physically active.
- Being a constant in a world that has changed so dramatically and quickly.
- Bringing enjoyment, happiness and fun during an experience of loss, isolation and trauma.
- Allowing children to cope with feelings that are difficult, painful or frightening.
- Helps children make sense of what has happened to them and changes in their world and regain control over their lives. (They may act out events which will help them to understand what is happening).
- Allowing children, the opportunity to explore their own creativity.
- Supporting children to relax and forget their worries.
- Allowing children to develop their own strengths and ability to cope.

*“Play gives children the opportunity to try on different versions of themselves, like fancy dress. To discard some and hold on to others. But life is uncertain at the moment and none of us is sure where we will all end up. Children need to be assured that all this will be over one day, and that they can still rehearse their dreams for the future.”*

- Dr Mike Shooter,  
Chair, Play Wales

# Creative Activity

## Inspiration:

# CLOUDY PLAYDOUGH

### What is it?

In the Youth and Children's programs, we love to try out different recipes for creative art activities that use simple and easy to access ingredients. One of our most popular and favourite recipes is *Cloudy Playdough*.

We find that children of all ages (and adults) are often fascinated by its soft and stretchy nature. It lends itself well to mushing, squishing, poking and fidgeting with.

And using only 2 ingredients, there is no cooking required.



### Instructions

#### *You will need*

- Corn flour
- Conditioner (or lotion)
- Container for mixing
- Zip lock bag for storage

The basic rule of thumb is: *2 parts corn flour to 1 part conditioner*. You could try 2 cups of corn flour to 1 cup of conditioner. Don't worry too much about measuring the ingredients – you can add more corn flour if too gooeey, or conditioner if too dry and grumbly.

Start by mixing with spoon (or hands if you are keen). Once it has roughly come together, you will have to knead it with your hands for a few minutes before it starts to become cloud-like.

Once you have found the desired consistency, you can keep using as is (it will be white) or break up into a few bits and support your child to try out some color or texture variations. You can try adding things like glitter, lavender, or food dye.

If you just want to make up the whole batch as one colour – add the food dye in before you start mixing. If it dries out or becomes crumbly, add a little water or conditioner to revive. Store in airtight container.

Using a baking tray or container can be a great space in which to explore the playdough. Children might like to add figurines or bits of nature – like sticks, leaves, gum nuts, or other things you find in the garden.

# Tips for Setting up a Creative Play Space at Home

- **If you are doing something arty, find a space where mess won't be too much of a concern.** This could involve putting down a tarp or a big sheet to catch mess, setting up somewhere outside or even utilising the bathtub or shower.
- **Don't worry if the play time doesn't go for as long as you would like.** The quality of the play space is more important than the quantity. Children might find it difficult the first time they try something, be tired/hungry, or they just might not be interested on that particular day – that's ok!
- **Notice that there are different ways of being with children when they play – all equally valid.** Sometimes children will want you to play with them, assist them, sit close by and watch them play, or just to be there to enjoy their play with them. Follow their lead.
- **Find what interests your child.** This might be more sensory things (like cloudy playdough or slime) or imaginative play with dress ups and toys; crafty activities; drawing; nature play or just singing and dancing. Allow your child to lead and choose the activity which will give them a greater sense of ownership.
- **It doesn't have to cost money.** Keep a box of assorted recycled/found things as inspiration. This could include things like leaves, gum nuts, toilet rolls, used wrapping paper, empty boxes etc.



Holyoake's Children & Youth team is here to support you. Please call (08) 9416 4444 or email [ClientServices@Holyoake.org.au](mailto:ClientServices@Holyoake.org.au)

For further support, please contact:

Alcohol and Drug Helpline 24hrs:	(08) 9442 5000
Lifeline:	13 11 14
Kids Helpline:	1800 551 800
1800 RESPECT:	1800737732