

Planning Spring Play, Raising Lifetime Leaders

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When the sun is out, the air is warm, and the birds are chirping, it's time to beat those winter blues with outside play! While it is true that free play encourages imagination, allowing kids to "be bored" will unleash their creativity. There's still lots to be said about helping children plan for play. As parents, modeling our thought process and questioning skills will help our children be decisive decision makers, become strategic planners, and develop leaderships skills. Consider the following scenario:

Phase 1 – Invite your child to be a decisive decision maker.

Child: Mommy, Daddy, can we play outside?

Parent: Sure, what would you like to do? Would you like me to help you think of ideas?

At this point, your child may very well say “No, thank you” to your offer of help. Imagine how empowered your child will feel because you gave him permission to say “No.” This is a very powerful step, as it communicates to your child that you trust him to be decisive in his decisions. He will continue to the next phase with a definitive idea for play all ready to go!

Phase 2 – Help your child become a strategic planner.

If your child says “Yes, please” to your offer, continue to give him authority of the decision-making process. Affirm his suggestions and watch his confidence grow!

Parent: Let’s come up with a few possible ideas. You can brainstorm and I’ll write the ideas down. (Be sure to write down all ideas without editing.)

Child: We can ride bikes, go skateboarding, play basketball, or even go hiking...

Parent: I like your ideas. These are great ideas. Keep them coming!

Phase 3 – Instill and develop leadership skills in your child.

Together, decide which ideas you don't like, which ideas are possible, and how you plan to put them into action. Let your child take initiative of the plans and delegate how things get accomplished.

Parent: Sweetie, you've got some good ideas here, but I'm afraid we only have time to do one activity. Why don't you pick one and let me know how I can help you get ready to go for our adventure!

Child: Thanks, Mom and Dad! It's been raining so the trails might be closed. I'd like to go bike riding at the park instead. Could you bring the bikes down from the hooks in the garage? I'll go get my helmet and pack water and snacks.

At the end of the day, your child is still taking advantage of a wonderful spring day to go play and have fun. Try having intentional conversations with your child and watch them bloom and thrive as confident, independent, and responsible young citizens!

Wishing you all the best,

Jaime

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