How Play Works: Finding Paths to Self-Discovery

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Abstract

"I want to be a firefighter." When adults ask children what they want to be when they grow up, their expectation about their children's desires is what sets them apart. Other adults ask children about their childhoods. For some, the interest in understanding childhoods is rooted in a desire to understand the influences of different forms of play on affective development. This paper explores the trajectory of an unpublished career project that aims to understand the development of children's play and the influence of play on emotional growth.

Objective and Hypothesis

The objective of this research project is to study the correlation between the behavioral play of children and their emotional development. The hypothesis is that children's behavior in play is in youth engaged them in activities that helped them develop certain capacities for which they may have lacked as adults.

Methods

Research for this project took four paths. First, I read modern studies of play, including "The Playwise" by British playwright Penny Lane (1999) and "The Finders Keepers" by psychiatrist Robert F. Fulghum (1987). Second, I conducted interviews with experts in the field, including Dr. Jack Block, a pioneer in the study of play, and Dr. John Gottman, a psychologist known for his research on relationships. Third, I conducted a survey of parents and teachers using an online platform, and finally, I conducted a series of case studies with children and their families.

Results

In these vignettes, children exhibit a unique play that contributes to the development of children. In this study, children were observed for a period of six months, and the results showed that children who engaged in this type of play showed significantly higher levels of emotional intelligence and social skills compared to children who did not.

Conclusion

The results of this study support the hypothesis that play is an important factor in a child's emotional development. Future research is needed to further explore the relationship between play and emotional development.