

Prescription to Play



P2P RESOURCES

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This is a series of playful parenting practices drawn from the P2P Project in Bhutan implemented by Save the Children with the support of The LEGO Foundation.

About P2P

This learning resource is drawn from the implementation of the Prescription to Play (P2P) Project of Save the Children International in coordination with the Ministry of Health and other partners in Bhutan with the support of The LEGO Foundation.

P2P recognises the importance of playful interactions shaping young brains and helping young children reach their developmental potential. P2P aims to institutionalise play in Bhutan's health system and improve the motivation, capability and support families need to raise children in playful homes. The areas for transformation are:

- at the **health system level** where playful parenting is integrated to the appropriate programs of the Ministry of Health and the pre-service training of Health Assistants (HAs);
- at the **community level** where mass media campaign and community mobilisation activities were held to generate awareness, demand, and support for playful parenting in Bhutan;
- at the **household level** where P2P has engaged influential household members, including fathers and grandparents, to adopt playful parenting practices; and
- at the **regional level** where ARNEC helps build awareness and support for playful parenting by sharing P2P-specific insights and lessons, and advocating playful parenting in the Asia-Pacific region.

This is for you

ARNEC makes this learning resource to ECD networks and partners in the region to amplify the playful parenting practices generated from the P2P experience in Bhutan.

Our ask is for you to draw opportunities for adoption or localisation from this P2P resource as you design or enhance policies and programs promoting nurturing care, especially in the context of home-based and community-driven delivery of early childhood development services under the COVID-19 pandemic.

Feel free to use this resource and to share with your own network of partners so we can broaden the community of policy makers and practitioners supporting playful parenting at the country level and the region.

Reach us

For more information, please write us at secretariat@arnecc.net or visit <https://arnecc.net>, particularly the Advocacy Page on Responsive Caregiving and Playful Parenting.

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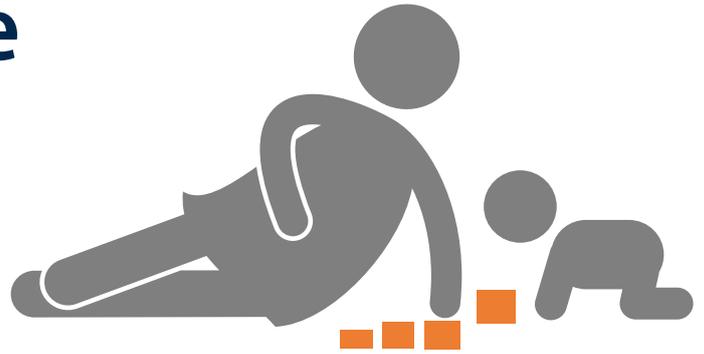
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Key message:

My child's future is in my hands

Activity	Tap, Tap, Tap
Project Component	Group Sessions



Activity

This activity is called 'Tap, Tap, Tap.' It can be played with babies from birth onwards.

1. Taking two cups (plastic or metal, or any other non-breakable and baby-safe material), have the caregiver tap them together lightly, moving slowly from right to left and back again.
2. Encourage the baby to follow the object with their eyes. For small babies this takes a lot of effort!
3. Remind the caregiver to smile, make eye contact, use a friendly voice and respond to what the baby does or does not want to do.

Caregivers of children with hearing loss may need to use items that produce louder sounds such as two tin cans. Caregivers of children with vision loss can physically guide the child's hand to safely touch the two items.

P2P Project Component: Group Sessions

Each month, caregivers come together at the health center and learn about early stimulation, responsive care, and positive parenting techniques with their Health Assistant. Each session is designed around a household item that each caregiver would have at home. The Health Assistant uses that item to demonstrate and practice 4 simple activities with caregivers. There is one activity for each of the targeted age range of children: 0-6 months, 6-12 months, 1 year+, and 2 years+. The Tap, Tap, Tap game comes from the session entitled: Playing Games with Cups. There are 12 sessions in the P2P Project Package, all delivered by Health Assistants through the Ministry of Health with support from Save the Children.

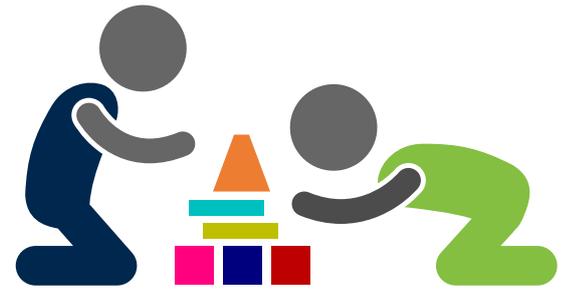
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Concerned with your child's development?

Talk to your health assistant.



Activity | Knock It Down

Activity

This activity is called 'Knock it down.' It can be played with babies from six months onwards.

1. You will need bowls, cups, or other household items that cannot break. Caregivers build a small tower using the items, stacking them on top of each other, one at a time. Encourage the baby to knock it down.
2. For small babies this will teach them cause and effect. Repeat this several times.
3. Parents of children with low vision could use items that will make a loud sound when they fall.

This activity helps young children develop fine motor skills, listening skills, language skills, sensory skills, early math skills, and social-emotional skills.

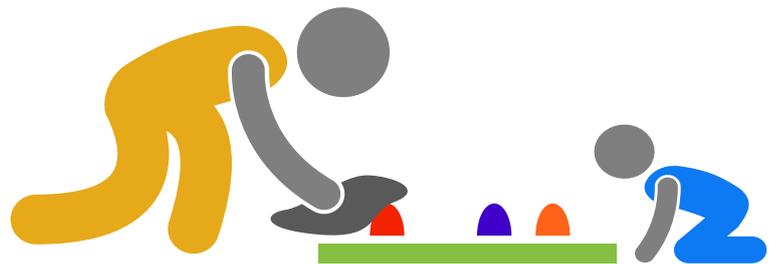
P2P Project Component: BCDST

The Bhutan Child Development Screening Tool (BCDST) is designed for the periodic screening of children from 2½ to 60 months by the Ministry of Health (MoH). The screening tool covers developmental domains, such as physical development, communication/language, problem solving/cognition, and personal social development.

The screening tool is part of the health assistant's (HA) normal immunization and growth monitoring visits. It indicates "Yes" and "No" responses from the parents/caregivers regarding whether or not the child exhibits certain skills or behaviors within four areas of developmental domain. The tool has also been paired with the C4CD Plus Play Plan, which has linked simple play activities with the milestones indicated in the BCDST to help develop a tailored plan for caregivers based on their child's screening, in addition to any additional support or referrals that may be necessary. The play activities are for all children, but the HA may emphasize particular play activities that will best support the child's development.

For example, if the screening indicates a delay in the physical development of a baby under six months, the HA might recommend caregiver's practice games like the activity provided above, in

The more I play with and respond to my baby, the more my baby will succeed.



Activity | Lift the Cloth

Activity

This activity is called 'Lift the cloth.' It can be played with babies from one year onwards.

1. You will need piece of cloth and an object (a cup or an apple). Caregivers puts an object on the floor or table and says "I am going to hide the object under the scarf and you will find it."
2. The caregiver first demonstrates by asking "Where is it?" and then lifts the cloth and says "Here it is!"
3. Let the child find the object by lifting the cloth. Repeat it several times.
4. Parents of children with physical disabilities may need to physically guide their children's hands to take out the cloth.

This activity helps young children learn that things are still there even if they cannot see them.

P2P Project Component: P2P Caregivers App

The P2P App is one of the key project activities. Through the P2P mobile application, caregivers can access age-appropriate child development interventions and materials. This will help them track the developmental progress of a child as they have access to all the games and activities provided them in the group sessions.

The mobile application is relevant for all caregivers, but is particularly useful in lockdown or emergency settings, such as COVID-19 when caregivers did not have access to regular ECCD services or lived in areas with limited access to health services.

The application is introduced to caregivers through their health centers, and is available on both on android and IOS systems. The app contains age-appropriate activities for the development of children including the materials needed and the caregiver's learning objectives. It also provides positive parenting ideas and caregiver wellbeing tips. The purpose of this app is to help caregivers (mothers, fathers and siblings) integrate developmentally stimulating activities in everyday chores covering all developmental domains.

You are your baby's favourite playmate!



Activity | Walk, Walk, Stop!

Activity

One of the group sessions is “Daddy and Me” session specially designed to encourage male caregivers’ participation and help them understand the importance of their engagement in their young children’s development. The Walk... walk...stop is a game which can be played with babies from two years onwards. Fathers can play this game outside while going for a walk.

1. As you walk beside your child, say walk ..walk .. stop.
2. Encourage the child to walk as you say ‘walk’ and stop when you say ‘stop’.

Parents of children with physical and/or intellectual disabilities may need to allow extra time for their child to respond to the “stop” and “go” commands. You may need to adapt the activity if your child cannot walk independently (i.e. crawling, kicking legs, or waving arms instead of walking). This

P2P Project Component: Mass Media

P2P is implementing an evidence-based behavior change communication strategy which includes four components: mass communication, advocacy, community mobilisation, interpersonal communication, and strategic use of data.

The mass communication campaign amplifies reach and impact by efficiently reaching audiences nationally. It aims to address barriers and brings about a paradigm shift on learning through play and the vital role of female and male caregivers.

The mass media campaign uses three main channels: radio, television, and social media (Facebook, WeChat, and the P2P app). The above game is part of the “daddy and me” group session routine, which shows how fathers can incorporate playful activities into their child’s daily routines. One of the aims of the mass media campaign is to promote the critical role of male caregivers, by sharing project key messages at a wider level.

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I can enjoy a storybook with my baby by just talking about the pictures



Activity | Paying attention

Activity

This activity helps development of babies' attention span and vision, and spending time on the stomach helps to support the development of their neck and back muscles.

1. Place the black and white cards at a distance not far away from the child.
2. Keep your baby on their belly so that they can look at the image in the cards

Babies love these kinds of images, and since their eyes are still developing, they love the high-contrast between black and white which helps them to focus their eyes.

Notice how attentive your baby is, even at such a young age.

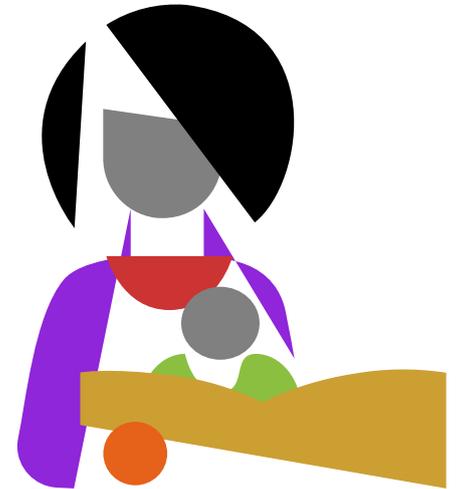
P2P Project Component: Magic Bag

Save the Children International Bhutan Country Office worked on development of a set of play materials which was provided to caregivers of children below three years of age in COVID effected area in the country. This set of materials is called the "Magic Bag," a fun resource for young children and caregivers to use to play together, especially while P2P program activities were suspended during the lockdown.

Each bag includes a set of black and white cards, a fabric animal doll, a set of fabric blocks, a fabric book of fruits and vegetables and a set of fabric stacking rings. These play materials are developed by Save the Children Bhutan Country Office with funding support from LEGO Foundation .

The project has encouraged caregivers to create a playful learning environment at home and integrate playful parenting and socio-emotional learning into everyday activities, promoting all developmental domains. The play materials are to stimulate joyful interactions that enhance parental self-confidence, the bond between caregivers and children, and the child's sense of

Babies with disabilities can grow strong and thrive in playful family



Activity | Describe the Picture

Activity

Caregivers can read to young children, even when they can't yet identify letters and words, by describing pictures with words, actions, and sounds. This reading game can be played from birth onwards.

This can be adapted for children with hearing difficulties by reading aloud with actions. Parents of children with hearing loss, low vision, or intellectual disabilities may need to spend extra time on each page so that the children have enough time to process. It may also help to use actions to support what you are saying (e.g. fan face pretending to be hot).

Caregivers should go slow and can point to the pictures and describe it for the child to be able to follow. For example, if there is a picture of an apple, a caregiver might say out loud, "This is an apple. It is red and round. It feels smooth." If a child has visual impairment, hold the child's hand and help them to touch a real apple and feel the shape and the texture. You could also do this activity with a tactile book with different sensations. Help your child to touch the different textures as you name them (e.g. "the ribbon is smooth, the tree trunk is rough").

P2P Project Component: Disability Inclusion

The P2P program is designed to be inclusive, welcoming and supportive of caregivers of children with disabilities. Each component of the program has been designed to specifically address their needs and empower caregivers to reduce barriers for their children. In monthly group sessions, caregivers learn four age-appropriate play activities relevant to the topic at hand. The activities for each group sessions are also adapted to cater to the needs of children with disabilities or delays in their development. Differentiated activities are included in the Health Assistants' (HAs) guide, as shown above when the activity included an adaptation for a child with a hearing or visual impairment.

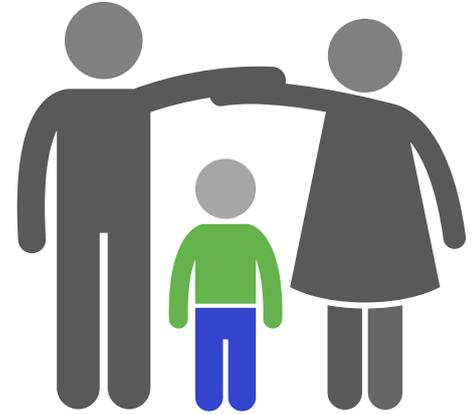
Similarly, when the HA administers a developmental screening tool (i.e. the Bhutan Child Development Screening Tool), the HA provides each caregiver with a personalised play plan based on their child's current development and milestones. Caregivers can play certain games that help develop specific milestones in their children, and if an impairment is identified, the HA can support the caregivers to adapt play activities to their child's needs and preferences.

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Instead of punishing a child, show a child what to do instead through your words and actions



Activity | Calm, Explain, and Model

Activity

When your child is doing something you don't want them to do, it's easier for children (and adults) if we show them what to do through our words and actions instead of punishing them. You can use the calm, explain and model technique:

1. Help your child calm down (e.g. by going outside, singing a song, stroking the back, breathing slowly, etc.).
2. Explain why you are not going to let them to do this.
3. Show your child through words and actions what you would like them to do instead.

Imagine this situation. Your toddler is running with a spoon and you are worried that your child will fall and get hurt. You want to use the "Calm, Explain, and Model" technique. You can (1) remove the spoon and take the child outside, (2) say: "I am not going to let you run with a spoon because you can get hurt"; (3) add "you can sit down and use it to drum on this box instead."

P2P Project Component: Responsive Care and Positive Parenting

Positive parenting and responsive care messages are integrated into nearly every component of the P2P program. As part of the group session component, caregivers are also taught to use positive parenting practices that promote a safe, respectful, and predictable relationship that nurtures children's self-regulation. The positive parenting and responsive caregiving tips are incorporated in each session, such as the one provided above on the Calm, Explain, and Model technique.

When a caregiver responds to a baby's needs and signals in a sensitive and accepting way, the caregiver is being responsive, and the baby feels secure and loved. Responsive parenting is critically important for a baby to build trust and feel confident to learn and explore. Positive parenting is about finding constructive ways to shape young children's behavior without using violence or punishment.

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Play makes children smart and happy. And if my child is happy, I am happy.



Activity | Caregiver Well-Being

Activity

Caregivers also attend a session on their wellbeing. This session is for mothers of young children. The objective is to help young mothers understand that it is important to take care of their own physical and mental health needs so they can take care of their child/children and themselves. The health assistants start the sessions with a relaxation activity which they can practice while holding their children. Let's practice the activity together.

1. Take a deep breath in (breathe in, counting to 10).
2. Take a deep breath out (breathe out, counting to 10).
3. Now we tense all of your muscles, starting with your feet. Tense your foot as tightly as you can for 5 seconds, and then relax.
4. Now tense your legs, tightly, and then relax.
5. Continue moving up your body, tensing the muscles of one area, and then relaxing, until you have finished. How do you feel?

P2P Project Component: Group Session (Caregiver Well-Being)

Caregiver well-being is a critical component of childcare; if the caregiver is not able to take care of themselves, it can be difficult for them to provide the support and care that their child needs. Child well-being is caregiver well-being and vice versa.

In order to help caregivers prioritise and manage their mental health, one of the monthly group sessions focuses on caregiver wellbeing. In the caregiver well-being session, health workers explain that being a parent is full of joy and anticipation, but it can also be a source of worry and stress. It's important for young parents to take care of their own physical and mental health needs so they can take care of their child/children and themselves.

Health Assistants (HAs) discuss with young parents about the joys and worries of being a parent, identify some of the signs of stress, and demonstrate and share methods on how to manage these. The mobile application also provides caregiver wellbeing resources and materials, and HAs are trained to understand the importance of well-being and stress management, especially for caregivers.