

**DEAR FAMILIES,**

As 2009 ended, Newsweek Magazine ([www.newsweek.com](http://www.newsweek.com)) looked through the biggest media hits (books, movies, television shows and songs) to glean information about what interests us as people.

Unfortunately, but probably not surprisingly, the top five American obsessions were violence, money, sex, youth and vampires. Now, if you were to ask the average person about their priorities, they might not mention these five items, but that is what our choices reflect. If someone were to visit our planet and view our lives from an outside perspective, they would leave with the impression that those five things are the most important to us.

Imagine that someone were to come from another planet and peer into your life. What do your choices say about you? In some ways, your child is like that extra-terrestrial visitor. S/he has been on this planet for just a few years and is learning about it and you by watching every move you make.

Take a minute, look around and reflect on what your life says about you:

- Is your home a place of comfort and togetherness, or money and prestige?
- Are you centered on life as a family, or does your life dictate how your family lives?
- Is your home one of acceptance and joy, or expectations and structure (or a mixture of both)?
- Are your children viewed as their own people, or as extensions of who you want them to be?
- Do the choices you make (how you spend your time) reflect the world in which you want your child to live?

There is no inherent value judgment in the above questions. As human beings, we can set our priorities and live our lives. The important thing is that your choices truly reflect (especially to your child) who you are and what you value.

As Eloise Greenfield said, "People are part of their time. They are affected by the things that happen in their world." As we help our children make sense of this world in which they were born, we can show them that we can shape it by our choices instead of letting it shape who we are to become.

Respectfully,  
The Education Team



**HAPPIEST MOMENTS OF CHILDHOOD**

Think back to the happiest moments of your childhood. Chances are they were times of carefree play and moments with little to do besides thinking your own thoughts. Remember sitting on the grass watching ants scurry about? How about rounding up friends for a game of Red Rover or basketball? Do you remember curling up with a comic book or testing out a new paper airplane design?

To adults, it may seem that these activities weren't particularly important. However, child development specialists say they were imperative for cultivating creativity and imagination, as well as expanding intellectual, emotional and social skills. In other words, unstructured child's play, the kind with no rules, few gadgets or equipment, and little or no adult direction, packs a powerful developmental punch.

Jane Healy, a psychologist, educator and author says too many parents and policy-makers just don't understand the importance of play in children's development. "Learning the multiplication tables and the alphabet are very important. But those skills need to reside inside a mind that has been expanded by the imaginative and joyous exploration of our environment and the possibility that it offers for fun," Healy says.

At Childtime, we encourage social, emotional and intellectual development in our safe, homelike environment. We have pillows, couches or comfy chairs for children to lounge on while reading a book or talking to a friend. Family photos and children's art are

displayed in our classrooms so children can talk about themselves, and their likes and dislikes. Learning centers like the Pretend Center are filled with dress up clothes; the Language and Art Centers have paper, scissors, and all kinds of writing and painting tools. You will see journals for your child to write, draw or share their thoughts and feelings in (with or without the help of their teacher).

All kinds of open-ended creations (with no directions from adults of "this way" or "that way") can be made when simple materials like these are shared with children. Notice children sitting on the floor in the Block Center building skyscrapers or taking a trip in the train they just built. And in the Science Center you may see children staring at the workings of an ant farm the teacher brought in or a caterpillar that is making a chrysalis.

What kind of play is your child doing at home or on the weekends? Think about it. Is most of it organized play led by adults like sports, classes and extracurricular activities where rules must be followed? Even the most preferred play things, such as computers and video games are generally scripted by adults. Healy believes that with such a lack of child-initiated play, "We are short-circuiting a lot of their development. That's because play is the way that children work out their emotional issues, their fears, their anxieties. It's the way they develop a self, a way they develop a sense that they are important people who have ideas to share and who can get along with other people."

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**CHILDTIME'S THE EMPOWERED CHILD™ CURRICULUM PHILOSOPHY**

The Empowered Child™ curriculum supports your child by developing the critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed to succeed in kindergarten, throughout elementary education and across a lifetime of learning. Childtime teachers plan lessons in many important academic disciplines, including:

**READING & WRITING**

Your child learns to love and understand the written word by journal-writing, experiencing wonderful books, storytelling and participating in regular large and small group activities that focus on letter shapes and sounds.

**MATHEMATICS**

By counting, patterning, sorting, classifying, estimating and predicting, your child develops foundational math skills and an appreciation for the world of numbers.

**SCIENCE**

Performing experiments, investigating properties and observing cause and effect help your child build scientific thinking skills and a connection with the natural world.

Through The Empowered Child curriculum, children feel valued for who they are. Students leave our program well-prepared for their future education, empowered to acquire the skills they will need to become responsible members of their community, creative problem solvers and life-long learners.

If you have questions about the Childtime classroom experience, please speak with your director or contact us at [info@childtime.com](mailto:info@childtime.com).



[www.childtime.com](http://www.childtime.com)

If you would like to respond to anything you read, have parenting questions or child development topics that you'd like to see explored in future issues of this monthly newsletter, please email us at [education@childtime.com](mailto:education@childtime.com). We would love to hear from you!



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We would like to leave you with these thoughts from Rhonda Clements, a Hofstra University professor and head of the American Association for the Child's Right to Play. She states that no one knows exactly what academic or life skills are going to be necessary 20 years down the road. "But one thing we can bet on is that we will still need people who can solve problems, which is one benefit of play. The people who brought us the technology of today were obviously wonderful players."



## EXTEND THE CHILDTIME EXPERIENCE INTO YOUR HOME

**There are many ways to support your child's development at home. Here are some activities you can do together that will support your child's growth.**

**Infant** – Securely tie one end of a ribbon or a scarf to a stuffed toy and the other end of the ribbon to a rattle. Make sure there is no more than a 6 inch length of ribbon between the two items for safety purposes. Place the item on the floor, let your child crawl over to it and watch their excitement as they explore the stuffed toy.

**Beginning Steps/Exploration Station** – Go for a walk around the house. Encourage your child to follow you, moving different ways (you could crawl, high-step, bend down low, walk fast, walk slow, etc.). Now encourage your child to move in some different ways.

**Early Learners** – Have your child get a favorite doll or stuffed animal and hold it out in front of them. Ask your child to do simple actions with the doll. For example, can they put the doll over their head, spin around, or jump up and down with their doll?

**Skill Builders/Kindergarten Connection** – Go outside with your child and bring along some paper and a pencil. Look for signs of Spring around your yard. Be sure to look up and down. Write out all the different things your child notices.

**Discovery Club** – The next time you take a walk with your child take a quarter along. When you reach the sidewalk or road in front of your house flip the quarter. If it comes up "heads," turn left. If it comes up "tails," turn right. Walk until you get to the next intersection, then flip your quarter again to see which way you should turn.

## FOCUS ON LEARNING AT CHILDTIME®

At Childtime, you may see children exploring how to take care of their teeth, moving like different forms of transportation, or doing three sets of different exercises. Why is this an important part of the day? These activities build an understanding of a healthy lifestyle.

Studies show that if positive habits in the areas of health, fitness and nutrition are formed in early childhood they are more likely to last a lifetime. These types of activities give children the encouragement they need to begin making good choices in these areas.

The next time you are in your child's classroom, notice the fun props kids use to move in creative ways. You may see scarves, streamers, hula hoops, ribbon sticks, or shapes and paths marked on the carpet with tape. Children's ability to think and focus is directly connected with their ability to move their bodies. So, the more they move, the more deeply they will be able to understand the world around them.

