

# ALL-SA

## ACTIVE LEARNING LIBRARIES - SOUTH AFRICA

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## WORLD PLAY DAY - 28<sup>TH</sup> MAY



WORLD PLAY DAY celebrations will be held throughout South Africa and in more than 30 countries around the World on 28 May to create awareness of the importance of play specifically in children's lives, but also for families.

### Background

The Right to Play and Recreation is a part of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 31). The South African government has signed this convention. It is our aim to create awareness of and support for this Article by promoting the Right to Play through a day of playful activity and through media exposure.



### The Importance of Play

If play is indeed "nature's training for life", a statement that is well supported by research, it follows that governments, institutions, professionals working with children, and parents alike should be working together to protect and promote this, arguably, most fundamental of children's developmental rights.

Play is fundamental to *all aspects* of child development. It is crucial in children's intellectual and physical growth, in their social and emotional development and fosters flexibility and resilience. In this rapidly changing world, play is often the key to children's ability to cope and handle stress positively.



Play is a key component in preserving community and culture in the broadest sense. Through positive outdoor play experiences, children gain an appreciation of the natural environment.

It is important for children and youth that government and other agencies understand that health is not merely the absence of disease. The highest possible level of physical health and mental wellbeing for young people cannot be realized through the health sector alone. Play and recreation have profound long-term human benefits.

Article 31 has been called the 'most neglected' article of the UN Convention, evidenced by the lack of attention to it in reports by States Parties and a corresponding lack of responses seen in Concluding Observations.

## THE MESSAGE

Creating a culture of playing is the mission of **World Play Day**.

It is about knowing the importance:

- Of allowing play to happen and giving children the time to play.
- Of understanding that children learn through play. That playing is the work of a child – that nature drives a child to play.
- Of providing safe spaces to play that take into account children's play needs.
- Of taking the time to play with a child.
- Of making sure that the traditional games that you played as a child are passed on to the new generation.
- Of inviting someone from an older generation to come and play a game.
- Of making sure that the whole family play together often.



## The Current Status

The importance of play is often not even mentioned in posters or articles related to children's needs. Issues like safety, health, nutrition, shelter and education are seen to be more important.

This is also true for South Africa, where the opportunity to play is either thought of as a luxury or as totally unimportant. Many children in South Africa lack spaces and opportunities to play. Housing projects for the poor often do not have special safe spaces for children showing a lack of awareness.

Many parents or caregivers did not have the chance to play during their own childhood and now they see play as unimportant or they do not know how to play with their sons and daughters.

This neglect of a child's basic right and need often has serious negative consequences for his or her development. For example:

- One of the causes of childhood obesity is a lack of opportunity for active play.
- The difficulty children in South Africa have with maths and science can partly be attributed to a lack of problem-solving play activities in their early years.
- Difficulties in learning to read and write can be traced back to a lack of understanding about how play activities develop essential literacy skills.
- Children that mostly play on their own with computer games may find it difficult to socialize with other children and their language skills may not be very good.
- Lack of opportunities to play can affect a child's mental health because play helps children to relax and relieves stress.

Therefore a lot needs to be done to make sure that adults understand the importance of playing and to provide adults with the resources to make play happen.

This includes:

- toy libraries that provide toys, games and activities
- Ideas for games and for making toys
- safe parks and open spaces

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF WORLD PLAY DAY EVENTS

Raising awareness about children's right to play, highlighting the importance of playing for healthy development and providing children with an opportunity to play. **Our message to parents is:**

**Play a favourite game from your own childhood with your child and learn a new game from your child on World Play Day – 28 May.**

ALL – SA encourages everyone involved with children throughout South Africa to engage in at least one playful activity on World Play Day.

E.g. At schools, each class could have a chance to go outside and play a game like catches which only requires the children and some space. The "clapping game" where 2 children clap against each other's hands is another favourite, as is "Rock, Paper, and Scissors".

For those wanting to hold a larger event, ALL-SA will provide information on how to organize a safe and successful World Play Day event in the community

