



**EMPOWERING CHILDREN AND PARENTS THROUGH PLAY**  
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# A little bit about me



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# Today's Presentation

1. What is Juega Conmigo?

2. Why Play?

What we have learned from research and from Juega Conmigo

- For child
- For Parent
- For Professionals

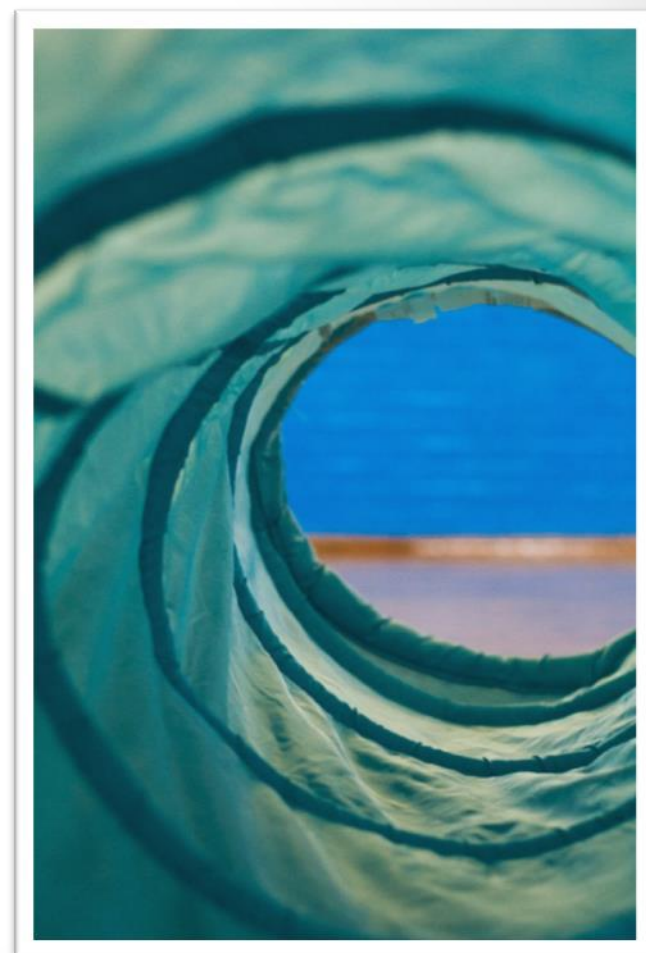
# What is Juega Conmigo?

- ❖ Unique, playful learning program that applies concepts of play and human development to promote the healthy development of children and positive parent-child interactions
- ❖ Directed to children 0 to 3 years old and their parents
- ❖ Free of charge



# What is Juega Conmigo?

- ❖ Enrollment basis: 12 weeks each fall and spring, and 10 weeks over the summer.
- ❖ Evidence based curriculum shared with the parents in a way that is accessible and engaging.
- ❖ Predictable routine benefits:
  - ❖ Parents by allowing them to hear, observe, and practice principles
  - ❖ Children by engaging in activities that promote different areas of development.
- ❖ Connect families to different resources in the community.





# Juega Conmigo Program Activities

Guided  
Conversation



Free  
Play



Clean-up/  
Bubbles



Games &  
Activities



# Why Play?



# Questions?

1. What was your favorite thing to do as a child when you were playing?
2. What was your favorite toy?
  - What was it like?
  - What did you like to do with that toy or object?
3. Who did you play with?
4. What does it mean for you to play today?



# Time for play has changed

- In 1981, school-age children had 40% of their time open for free play.
- By 1997, free play time was reduced to 25%.
- 40% of school districts have eliminated recess time.



# Play today



Play is rapidly disappearing from our homes, our schools, and our neighborhoods. Over the last two decades alone, children have lost eight hours of free, unstructured, and spontaneous play a week.

Elkind, (2008) Greater Good

# What is play?

- ❖ It is a body and mind process, involving all senses.
- ❖ The way children learn about themselves, the people around them, the world they live in, and how things work in their world.
- ❖ It is the activity that children continue to do even in the most traumatic of situations.



# Characteristics of play

These elements distinguish play from other activities:



- ❖ Pleasurable
- ❖ Intrinsically motivated
- ❖ Concerned with process
- ❖ Free of externally-imposed rules
- ❖ Actively engaged
- ❖ Non-literal

Garvey (1977)

# Types of play

- ❖ Mastery: exploration and repetition
- ❖ Innovative: imaginative and creative
- ❖ Kinship play: interactive
- ❖ Therapeutic: healing

Elkind (2007)





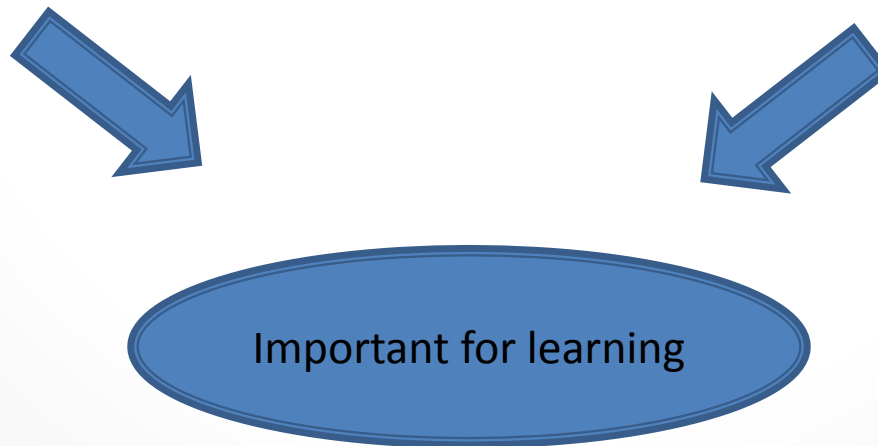
# Free Play and Guided Play

## Free Play

- Self-motivated
- No specific goals are set
- Free exploration

## Guided Play

- Adult provides structure
- Goal oriented
- Encourages exploration of concepts



# **What does research tell us about play?**

Children need both unstructured free play and playful learning under the gentle guidance of adults to best prepare them for entrance into formal school.

Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009

# Play Benefits Children

- ❑ Promotes healthy brain development
- ❑ Physical, social, emotional , cognitive and language skills --all used and developed in play.
- ❑ Provides a meaningful context for children to learn concepts and skills and extend on what they are learning



# Benefits of play in action



Watch how this mother enters the play, gives suggestions, and acknowledges her daughter



# Benefits of play in action

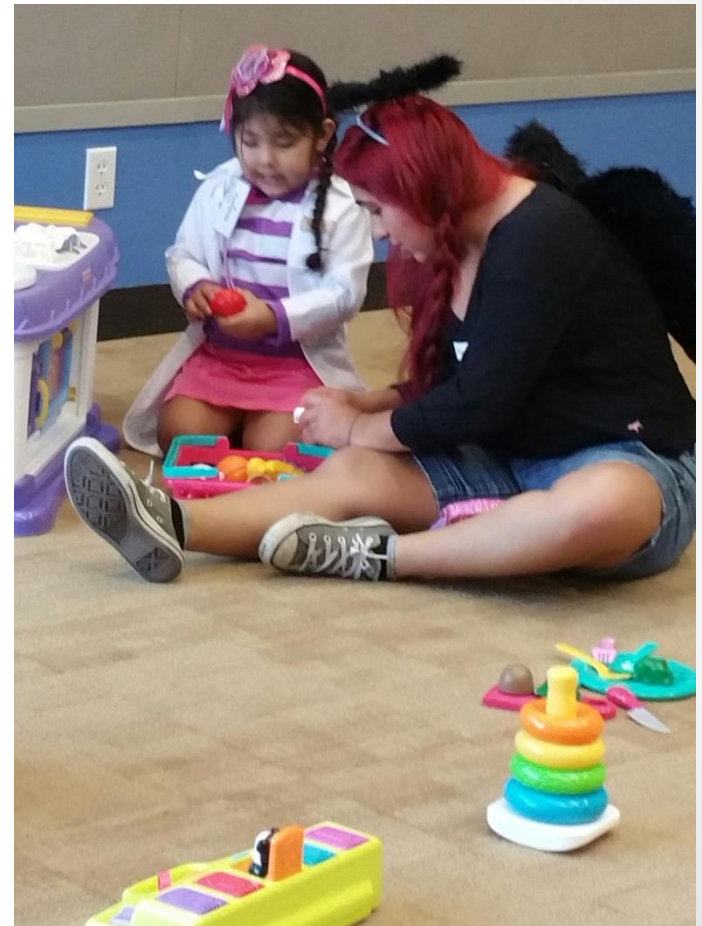


Watch for conflict between the children, one of them expresses emotions in a more intensive way,



# Play benefits parents too

- ❑ Perfect vehicle to strengthen the parent-child relationship
  - Appreciates the uniqueness of each child
  - Open door for the sharing of values
  - Allows parents to see the world through the eyes of the child
  
- ❑ Can be a stress reducer
  
- ❑ Boost energy and vitality



# Play helps build strong parent-child relationships



# Potential barriers to engage in play

- Negative perception of play
- Family responsibilities
- Work responsibilities and schedule
- Limited resources

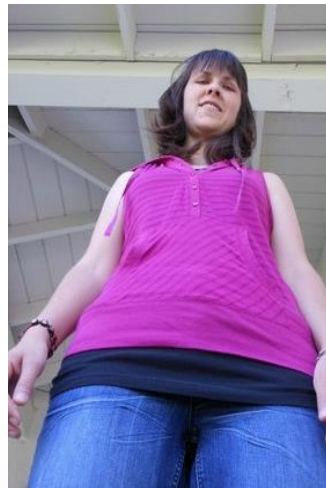


# Cultural considerations

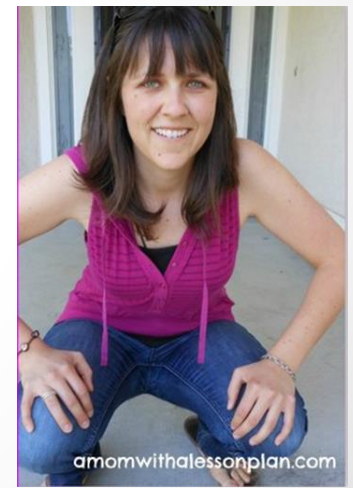
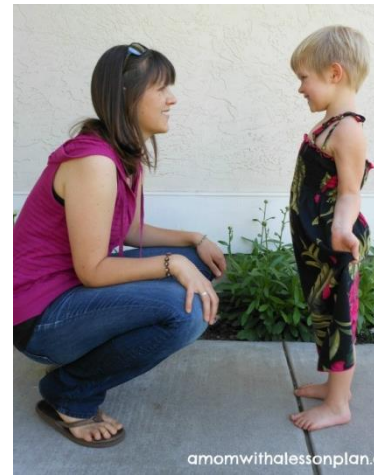
- Parental beliefs and behaviors regarding play are different among cultures.
- These beliefs about play influences whether they play with their children and how they play with their children.
- What do you know about parents from diverse backgrounds?

# Play breaks down barriers between children and adults

❖ Play is a common language for children and adults.



❖ Play allows adults to get to child's level.





# Methods used in Juega Conmigo

- Educating
- Modeling
- Practice time
- Observation and Feedback



# Recommendations for parents

- Establish regular play times
- Set aside restrictive rules
- Create appropriate spaces for play
- Use undivided attention during play times
- Always be at the child's level
- Embrace repetition
- Allow the child to be the leader
- Don't force play or try to prolong a game



# Recommendations for professionals

- Don't make assumptions about children's and parents' needs
- Ask questions
- Step out of your comfort zone
- Create environments that are safe and age appropriate
- Don't be afraid to use play as an informal tool to assess children's development and skills

# Play is **NOT** a luxury!

For too long, we have treated play as a luxury that kids, as well as adults, could do without.

Play is *worth defending*: It is essential to leading a happy and healthy life.

Elkind (2008) Greater Good

Play is simple, yet also profound



