



The Family Place Parent Child Center

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Playgroups: Taking on the Personality of its Community

It's a frosty February morning. Your two-year old is contently stacking plastic containers on the floor. You have phone calls to make, bedrooms to vacuum, bills to pay, and laundry to fold. This is your golden opportunity to get something done. So why would you pick up your child, bundle her into her snowsuit (which usually makes her cry), scrape the ice and snow off of your windshield and drive to a community playgroup?

Because in a few minutes, as you're getting that bill paid, she'll be finished with her Tupperware party. She'll run to see you and dive into a pile of folded laundry. Now you can't remember what you were going to write, and sock balls are rolling all over the floor. Dreams of productivity vanish. It's another day of balancing your needs with your child's. That's why you're tying that hat under her chin. Because playgroup is an opportunity to balance you needs, and hers, in a different way.

Playgroup gives your child a chance to be with other children, who also like to stack containers. It's a chance for her to use toys and materials that she doesn't have at home. It's your opportunity to be with other adults who share the trials and triumphs of parenting. It's an opportunity for both of you to experience yourselves as part of a community.

Playgroups can offer developmentally appropriate activities and play materials that encourage children to explore and experiment, and create. They offer both children and adults an opportunity to socialize. While children learn how to take turns and resolve conflicts, parents connect with one another to share information, ideas, and resources.

Although playgroups have these fundamental purposes in common, one playgroup may look very different from another. Some playgroups are organized around projects and circle time, while another may be an hour and half of free play. One group has snack together, and another has no snack at all. Some are in church basements, others in school art rooms, still others at parent child centers. Parents and caregivers may be playing with their children, watching their children play, or sharing with other parents. Some groups have a paid facilitator, and others are entirely parent run. If one playgroup doesn't fit well with you, seek out others until you find the one where you and your child feel right at home.

Each playgroup takes on the personality of its community. And the more each member speaks up about their needs, hopes, and visions, the more satisfying the playgroup will be for both the child and the adult. - reprinted from *the Success by Six Handbook*



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Why Playgroups are Good for Kids

1. Playgroup gives a child a chance to be with other children.
2. There will be toys and materials that a child may not have at home or have experienced.
3. Children learn how to share.
4. Children learn how to resolve conflicts.
5. It's a chance to be part of a community.

Why Playgroups are Good for Parents

1. It's a chance for parents to be with other adults who share the joys and pains of parenting.
2. Parents are reminded of the importance of play.
3. Parents can learn about new games and books for their child.
4. Resources and supports are available.
5. It's a chance to be part of a community.

The Family Place has an evolving list of community playgroups in northern Windsor and Orange Counties. Please contact us at 800-639-0039, or visit us at www.the-family-place.org for a complete list of groups.



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