

Healthy Body, Happy Me 2023

Stories



Stories

Children learn new words at an extremely fast rate and their vocabulary development is reliant on the words that they hear from adults and others around them. Babies will develop an understanding of some vocabulary before they even say their first word and by the time children are three years old they can typically comprehend around 1000 words.

The activities for today's Healthy Body, Happy Me focus on supporting communication and language development through stories. Sharing picture and story books with children, as well as making up your own stories, helps children from a very early age to develop:

- Imagination
- Memory recall
- Close relationships
- Listening and attention skills
- A knowledge that print carries meaning
- An understanding of new sounds and words
- An understanding of how different people live
- An understanding of empathy and other emotions
- Knowledge of different concepts such as shape and size
- An understanding of how to handle books with care and interest
- An understanding of the world in which they live and different life experiences.



Most of all, sharing stories gives children lots of enjoyment, helping them to discover that books are exciting and fun, which creates an early love of reading.

To engage children in stories, choose books that inspire their curiosity and interests. Remember that it is not just what you read, but also how you read it. The Effects of Storytelling and Story Reading on Oral Language Complexity and Story Comprehension of Young Children (2004) research showed that while reading and storytelling are both beneficial, storytelling offers unique benefits. The use of facial expressions, tone of voice and gestures keeps children engaged, which is crucial for learning.

The secret to successful storytelling is to know the story well and to have fun with it. Be courageous, put on different voices, be animated and use props. Children are not going to judge you, they are going to be enthused and value the experience they are sharing with you.

Talk With Me: Stories will provide you with lots of ideas to engage children in storytelling, helping them to develop a life-long love of stories and reading.

“Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world today.”

Robert McKee



Activity 1 Multisensory books

Multisensory books are a fantastic resource for children of all ages and abilities, helping them to connect with stories through tactile elements. The best multisensory books mean that children can touch, stroke, push, pull, lift and even smell their way through the story, providing them with opportunities to associate everyday sensations with describing words. Share these books together with the children, then leave them out for them to explore independently.

Multisensory book

Activity outline

- Create a front and back cover for the book and decide on a title, for example 'My First Book of Textures' or 'The Cat's Bed' (deciding which is the softest material for the cat's bed)
- Decide which resources you are going to add to the book. The resources list provides some suggestions but you can add as many different textures as you wish
- Add one texture to each page, securing this with glue. For younger children use larger pieces of each texture so they can feel this with their whole hand
- Add a word or words to describe the texture on the page next to it. For example next to sandpaper write the word 'rough'
- Once complete, hole punch each page and secure the book together with binding rings, treasury tags or string.



Learn through our senses

Top tip

Observe children's communication and language skills closely and gather valuable information from parents about how their child communicates to ensure you use the right level of non-verbal and verbal language for each child, building on their current ability.



Resources

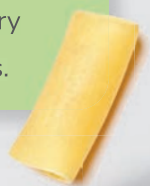


- Binding rings/treasury tags/string
- A range of sensory materials, e.g. dried pasta, tin foil, corrugated card, pompoms, feathers, doilies, cotton wool balls, sequins, straw, different textured fabrics, sand paper, buttons, ribbons, bubble wrap, small drawstring bags
- A4 coloured card
- Glue gun or glue
- Hole punch.



Learning opportunities include:

- Listen to and join in with stories
- Handle books with interest
- Look at books with familiar people
- Use descriptive vocabulary
- Learn through the senses.



Activity 1 Continued...

Extension ideas

Create a book of opposites. On each page add two different textures that are opposite to each other, for example, dried pasta for hard and fur for soft. Add words to describe each texture.

Create a scent book with smelly items such as vanilla pods and cinnamon sticks. Place them in draw string bags secured to pages for children to smell.

Make a traditional/modern story or rhyme book or make up your own based on children's interests. On each page draw the scene and add tactile materials. For example, 'Baa Baa Woolly Sheep' using cotton wool or a house for 'The Three Little Pigs' made from sandpaper and straw. On each page add a narrative (or leave this blank so you can tell the story yourself or children can describe what is happening in the picture).

Give a new lease of life to old books by adding touch and feel elements to them.



Exploring textures

Key vocabulary might include:

- Soft
- Hard
- Smooth
- Rough
- Fluffy
- Bumpy
- Wrinkly
- Spongy
- Crunchy
- Lumpy
- Rubbery
- Squashy
- Ridged.

Activity 2 Outdoor storytelling pots

Did you know that engaging children in an abundance of pretend play can lead to them being more creative as adults? (*Imaginary Wordplay in Childhood and Maturity and its Impact on Adult Creativity*, 2006)

Storytelling through small world play is a fun way to ignite children's imagination and support them to connect with each other through a shared narrative. By creating storytelling pots you will provide a wide range of opportunities for children to play imaginatively and build their own stories outdoors.

Outdoor storytelling pots

Activity outline

- Decide where you will place your storytelling pot, e.g. in a quiet corner surrounded by foliage or next to a water facility if children are able to use water to support their storytelling
- Fill each planter or recycled tyre with soil leaving a gap of about two inches from the top
- Create your storytelling box. It should contain small world resources that children can set up themselves and retell or make up stories with. You might use a mixture of continuous and replenishable resources in the boxes and you can change or add to these over time to extend the storytelling opportunities. The more intriguing the items, the more children will use their imagination to create different and magical stories each time
- Consider whether you can use recycled resources to create storytelling props, such as making a space rocket from a plastic water bottle.

Learning opportunities include:

- Develop cooperative and social skills
- Explore the world around them
- Become confident storytellers
- Develop fine motor skills
- Develop imagination
- Talk descriptively.

Top tip

Use talk to describe what children are doing by providing a running commentary, e.g. 'Oh, I can see what you are doing, you're flying the spaceship to the moon.'



Resources

- Range of resources to create themed storytelling pots
- Half barrel planters, plastic planters or recycled tyres
- Plastic boxes to store resources
- Pebbles
- Sand
- Soil.



Activity 2 Continued...

Possible box themes:

- **Fairy land:** Small world fairy characters, artificial flowers, twigs or small log cuttings, corks, glass beads, pebbles, match sticks covered in biodegradable glitter, a fairy door, wind chimes, bags of dried scented herbs
Books: 'Sparkly Touch and Feel Fairies' by Usborne Books or 'Freddie and the Fairy' by Julia Donaldson & Karen George
- **Farm:** Small world figures, small world animals (e.g. cows, sheep and pigs), a tractor, artificial grass patches, dried beans and pulses, straw, small spoons or digging tools, herbs, water
Books: 'Oh Dear!' by Rod Campbell or 'Farmer Duck' by Martin Waddell & Helen Oxenbury
- **Space:** Small world figures, a rocket, small world aliens (or your own made from green lollipop sticks with googly eyes), stars, sand, gravel, white pebbles, large marbles, tin foil, metal bottle tops, cornflour, biodegradable glitter
Books: 'Red Rockets and Rainbow Jelly' by Sue Heap & Nick Sharratt or 'Whatever Next!' by Jill Murphy
- **Pirates:** small world figures, small world crocodiles and sharks, a pirate ship, a treasure map, gold coins, sand, shells, dried seaweed, driftwood, pebbles, jewels, glass beads, a treasure chest
Books: 'Pirate Pete' by Nick Sharratt or 'The Night Pirates' by Peter Harris & Deborah Allwright.



Explore small world

Key vocabulary might include:

- **Fairy land:** Fairies, fly, magical, sparkle, enchanted, glittery, sparkle
- **Farm:** Animal names, plant, plough, meadow, graze, grow, field, barn, tractor, farmer
- **Space:** Astronaut, suit, helmet, alien, rocket, space station, moon, shooting star, dark, star, telescope
- **Pirates:** Pirates, pirate ship, treasure, jewels, compass, captain, adventure, cargo, gold, anchor, sea.

Ideas for different ages

For babies and toddlers, create simple storytelling baskets with items from their favourite stories. Include a toy dog (for Spot), add spots to him and include simple props for him to hide under/in/on top of. For Goldilocks and the three bears add small world resources such as daddy bear, mummy bear and baby bear, spoons and bowls and fabric for beds. Alternatively include items to make up your own stories.



Activity 3 Lights, camera, action!

“Logic will get you from A – Z, imagination will get you everywhere.” Albert Einstein

Some of the world’s greatest inventors were, and continue to be, inspired by imagination and creativity, which are key characteristics for lifelong learning. A child’s capacity to develop their imagination and creativity depends on the opportunities they are provided with and the rich encouragement and modelling they receive from skilled practitioners who shows them the endless possibilities.

Lights, camera, action! Create your own theatre stage for children to create and present their own stories on a large scale. Along with being fun, this type of dramatic play improves children’s confidence and social skills which can lead to them becoming stronger communicators.

Lights, camera, action!

Activity outline

- Locate it preferably against a wall or in an alcove area where a backdrop can be added. Have space for children to walk on and off stage and somewhere for them to get changed. Create storage for costumes and props and a space for the audience to sit
- Create the stage area by duct taping a large square on the floor. You can cover the whole space if you wish or just create an outline
- Create your backdrop using old sheets to cover the wall. Add fairy lights and a pair of pulled back curtains to frame the area
- Add dressing up resources. These can include themed costumes such as police, princesses, or pirates alongside open ended materials such as plain t-shirts, lengths of material, pegs, scarves, hats, bags, jewellery, wigs, sun glasses, etc
- Add stage props, for example, sweeping brush, money, a pet, phone, musical instruments or tailor props to children’s interests and storybooks you are reading. Also provide open ended props that can be anything e.g. wooden blocks, pine cones, sticks, stones
- A rail made from a broom handle with hooks to hang from, a mug tree for jewellery, storage boxes, over the door organisers, folding storage hangers can all provide useful storage space
- Encourage children to act, sing and dance. Model how to use the stage – you could act out their favourite stories, engaging them as they feel confident
- You will soon see and hear their ideas flowing as their confidence grows
- Encourage children to invite their friends to watch performances.

Top tip

Use non-verbal cues to support children’s understanding of new vocabulary such as gestures (pointing), signing, real objects, pictures and visual cues. This will help all children but in particular these who are non-verbal or have English as an additional language.



Use stage props



Resources

- Old sheets, a pair of curtains
- Dressing-up resources
- Space for a theatre stage
- Stage props
- Fairy lights
- Duct tape
- Chairs.



Learning opportunities include:

- Use a range of different vocabulary, tone of voice and gestures to portray characters
- Develop social relationships
- Increase confidence
- Negotiate who will play individual roles
- Develop gross motor skills.



Activity 3 Continued...

Ideas for other ages



Use a large cardboard box (big enough for babies and toddlers to get into), to create a play base such as a town or the beach where children can immerse themselves fully in the scenery. Add props, different textured and creative materials and tell stories with the children. Add different resources as the story develops.



Become immersed in the scenery

Extension ideas

Support regular theatre performances where different children take part in the show while others watch in the audience.

Provide resources so children can create posters to advertise the event and make tickets for the audience to purchase.

Regularly add new or unusual props, for example a light up lamp, to spark their imagination and encourage them to tell their own and familiar stories.

Create an outdoor theatre stage.

Provide a large cardboard box and puppets for children to perform puppet shows.

Key vocabulary might include:

- Theatre
- Stage
- Costume
- Props
- Actor
- Rehearsal
- Audience
- Box office
- Ticket
- Imagine
- Pretend
- Different voices/emotions.



Activity 4 Stories around the campfire

For adults, stories around the campfire may conjure up images of being cosy, warm and snug, listening to engaging stories read aloud as everyone sits together around the fire. This activity shows how you can re-create this cosy feeling indoors, providing an alternative for your group story time.

Stories around the campfire

Activity outline

- Set up your cosy campfire resources providing a range of blankets, cushions and stools. This activity might be best when children naturally want to rest, such as after lunch or perhaps at the end of a long day
- Invite children to get comfortable for stories around the campfire. They can take off their shoes and find a space to relax. If children bring pyjamas or a onesie to nursery, invite them to wear it
- Ask children to share their own experiences of fires at home, e.g. of families using a fire pit. Talk about how fires provide light and warmth, act as an insect deterrent and provide heat for cooking outdoors. Explain how the stone ring around the fire is added for safety to contain the campfire, stopping it from spreading and to stop people getting too near
- Share familiar stories or make up your own
- Dim the lights or turn them off completely if everyone is comfortable with it, to appreciate the indoor campfire as you read the story.



Resources

- Pyjamas or onesies, blankets & cushions
- Sticks, fairy lights, artificial tea light candles or glow sticks
- Empty translucent milk carton, recycled glass jars
- Rock/stones or crumpled recycled paper painted grey
- Logs or recycled kitchen roll tubes painted brown
- Small stools, snacks & drinks
- Red, yellow & orange tissue paper
- Scissors, clear tape.

Learning opportunities include:

- Develop listening and attention skills
- Support well-being, feeling relaxed and cosy
- Enjoy social time with friends
- Enjoy stories.



Creating an indoor fire:

- Fill a large translucent milk carton with water and add glow sticks. Decorate the top with flames of red, yellow and orange tissue paper. Stack or attach twigs around the carton and surround with a ring of stones
- Fill clear glass jars with fairy lights and put them together. Decorate the jars with flames of red, yellow and orange tissue paper and surround with a stone safety ring
- Build a pile of logs and surround with a stone safety ring. Lightly scrunch some red, yellow and orange tissue paper and place this in the middle of the rocks in a bowl shape with the pointed edged sticking upwards like flames. Add an artificial tea light to the centre of the paper so the light shines through.

Ideas for different ages

Younger children can snuggle up with staff to listen to stories and older children can tell their own stories around the campfire.



Activity 4 Continued...

Extension ideas

Use the campfire for other group activities such as show and tell or singing songs around the campfire. Engage children in action songs, such as 'Ten Fat Sausages Sizzling in a Pan' or make up your own songs to familiar tunes, such as this song to the tune of 'Round and Round the Garden':

**Round and round the camp fire, remember to go slow,
One step, two step, careful as you go.**

Re-create the activity outdoors and have traditional campfire food such as hot chocolate or soup.

If children have experience of camping ask them to share their experiences with others. Perhaps this activity might develop into exploring camping more widely.

Create indoor and outdoor dens, adding fairy lights and soft furnishings for cosy storytelling spaces.

Invite family members in to tell stories, including hearing stories in other languages with someone to translate where needed.

Key vocabulary might include:

- Comfortable
- Warm
- Snug
- Cosy
- Campfire
- Wood
- Light
- Heat
- Flame
- Danger
- Safe.



Create outdoor dens

Top tip

Engage children in shared attention by using animated tones of voice, gestures such as pointing and facial expressions such as smiling.

Further resources, links and stories:

Vocabulary and Early Language Skills - NDNA training

<https://bit.ly/3GZlfxP>

Quality Interactions with Babies - NDNA training

<https://bit.ly/3ZtHdjx>

Literacy Champions

<https://bit.ly/3X1F1hK>



Create storytelling pots



Listening to stories

National Day Nurseries Association

At NDNA, we don't just provide nursery membership, lobby government and offer training, we are dedicated to making a difference. We are a charity that believes in quality and sustainability so we put our members' businesses at the very heart of ours. We enhance, support, nurture, cherish and challenge.

Every year we run an annual Healthy Body, Happy Me campaign to encourage better health and happiness by giving nurseries FREE resources for play, learning and fun.

Get involved with our 2023 campaign and help keep your children healthy and happy.

Important: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.



National Day Nurseries Association

National Day Nurseries Association

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