

Healthy Body, Happy Me 2024

Curiosity and me





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Babies and young children possess an insatiable curiosity that drives the exploration of the world around them. This innate force compels children to dismantle toys and objects, investigate every nook and cranny and ask countless questions. Nurturing their unwavering curiosity will promote cognitive development, help children make connections, foster creativity and open a gateway to learning.

Alison Gopnik, professor of psychology and philosophy at the University of California, is known for her *Theory theory* (2003) - a framework explaining how children develop theories about the world, testing and revising hypotheses through observation and experience. Her research on curiosity highlights the role of explorative play in cognitive development and highlights the importance of providing environments which encourage open-ended exploration.

Creating an environment that invites children to explore and investigate cultivates their sense of curiosity, critical thinking, problem-solving, observation and creativity skills. Investigation and exploration by children nourishes their innate sense of awe and wonder and lays the foundation for a life-long pursuit of knowledge and learning.

It is worth reminding ourselves that children live in the moment, therefore our responses should be in the moment. Practitioners need to be alert to children's activities, explorations, observations and enquiries, immerse themselves in their thinking and engage in thoughtful interactions to fuel their curiosity.

Today's activities encourage physical, sensory and investigative skills to kindle children's curiosity and facilitate their research as they try out new ideas, bounce back from failures and hone their skills and understanding.



Activity 1 Sensory garden

Children are born explorers, using their senses to decode and understand their surroundings. Creating a sensory garden will act as a provocation for exploration and a catalyst for curiosity. This activity promotes sensory engagement, fine motor skills and a deeper understanding of plants and nature.

Activity outline

Designate an area of your outdoor space to the sensory garden. Depending on the space available children can either plant in the ground, in a large planter or in small individual pots/containers.

Other natural elements can also be arranged in pots or in the available space, to create patterns and shapes that can be changed frequently, encouraging children's interactions with the sensory element of the garden. Install windchimes or other items that produce sound.

Encourage the children to explore the garden freely and engage them in discussions about what they are experiencing through their different senses. Ask open-ended questions to encourage problem-solving and critical thinking, e.g. "Why do you think this leaf is rough?"

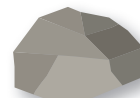
Discuss what the plants need to grow and how they can care for them to encourage a sense of responsibility and connection to nature.



How does it feel?



Resources



- Wind chimes or other sound making features such as trickling water, rustling bamboo leaves or old keys hung as a mobile
- Natural elements, e.g. stones, logs, twigs etc.
- Containers for planting and for arranging natural elements
- Child friendly gardening tools: Trowels, watering cans, spray bottles etc.
- Various plants with different textured and coloured leaves, fragrances, herbs, flowers, vegetables, etc.
- Cards to label the plants/areas (optional).



What can I see?



Activity 2 Mirror mirror

Through mirrors children begin to develop an awareness of reflection, angles and symmetry. Mirrors also make children aware of themselves, their physical presence and movements. Mirrors can be used alongside loose parts to add intrigue to visual provocations.

Activity outline

Set up the activity up on a table or in a space free from 'traffic.' Create a mirror 'book' by taping two mirrors together at a right angle to form a book shape, to reflect multiple images. Demonstrate how the mirror reflects images and light, introducing the concept of reflection.

Encourage children to explore the mirrors with the loose parts. Depending on the arrangement of mirrors, children can either place items on the mirror, in front or around the edge to observe reflections, patterns and shapes. Introduce words such as reflection, symmetry, angle, half, repetition and encourage children to plan and describe their creations. Encourage creative expression using patterns, shape, colour and texture, developing arrays (ordered arrangement of items), pictures and faces.

Encourage experimenting with reflections such as stacking objects, placing them in rows and observing cause and effect as they move objects. Ask open ended questions, e.g. "What happens when you move the pine cone?"



What can I see?



Resources

- Loose parts, e.g. pine cones, shells, twigs, small stones, leaves etc.
- Safety mirrors.

Extension

Put mirrors at the back and sides of a box with a few small world resources, creating a mini world for developing stories.

Place safety mirrors at floor height for babies and toddlers to observe themselves and their movements.



How many sticks are there?

Activity 3 Sensory explorer challenge

An obstacle course provides a safe space for children to experiment with different approaches to overcome something. Children of all abilities can develop gross motor and coordination skills through crawling, pushing, balancing and throwing while encouraging social and emotional development through collaboration and a sense of achievement.

Today's activity provides some suggestions for a sensory focussed course, inviting children to explore, experiment, problem-solve and be curious as they encounter each obstacle and try different ways to overcome them.

Activity outline

Mark the course with colourful cones/flags. Create obstacles depending on available resources and physical needs of your children, for example:

- **Tunnel crawl** – use fabric to make a tunnel, large enough for a wheelchair to pass under if required
- **Balancing beam** – create a low, wide beam or place tape on the ground for children to 'balance' on or pass their walker over
- **Hula hoop hop** – large hoops that children can roll or hop into
- **Tactile steps** – use materials such as grass mats, foam, bubble wrap to make stepping stones
- **Sounds tubes** – hang pipes of different lengths filled with rice, bells, beads etc. to hit with a thrown beanbag
- **Bubble station** – machine or bubble pot where children can create and pop bubbles.

Mark the end of the course with a banner or line to instil a sense of achievement. Encourage children to do activities together, where possible, to foster collaboration and ask them to suggest ideas and resources for other obstacles.



Resources

- Items to create obstacles, e.g. hoops, beams, tape, tunnels
- Tape/ribbon/flags to create a start/finish line.



How do I get through?



Jump, jump, jump

Activity 4 Ice rescue

The ability to solve problems is an essential life skill and requires encouragement and nurturing from an early age. Problem solving activities engage children's curiosity, patience and persistence. This activity invites children to explore different ways to approach a challenge using creative and innovative ideas.

Activity outline

Place objects or toys in the containers, add water and leave overnight to freeze. Set up the activity by placing the frozen items (in or out of the containers) in a tray, or similar.

Explain the challenge – the object (dinosaur/toy/brick etc) is trapped inside the ice and they need to rescue it. Encourage children to share ideas and solutions for how they can get the items out of the ice, e.g. hitting it, pouring water over it, using tools, throwing, melting, etc. Facilitate the children's investigations of their ideas and methods.

Once the object is released, discuss which techniques worked best and why. Encourage children to explain how they changed the ice, such as by breaking or melting it. Discuss which resources supported melting, e.g. water, salt, sunshine, radiator.

Praise their teamwork, problem-solving and perseverance.



What happens when I...?



Resources

- Tray
- Water
- Freezer
- Small toys/objects
- Tools: Scissors, tweezers, spoons etc.
- Water spray bottle or dropper
- Containers, e.g. ice-cube tray, cup, dish, silicone muffin tin etc.



Learning outcomes

- **Problem-solving:** How to get the object out of the ice
- **Teamwork:** Exchange ideas and learn from each other
- **Fine and gross motor skills:** Use tools
- Explore seasonal changes
- **The concept of change:** Freezing/melting
- **Language development:** Vocabulary and concepts.



Help them escape!

Further resources, links and stories:

Maths Champions

www.ndna.org.uk/maths

PANCo - NDNA training

www.ndna.org.uk/PANCo

Your Essential Guide to Working with Children Under Three - NDNA publication

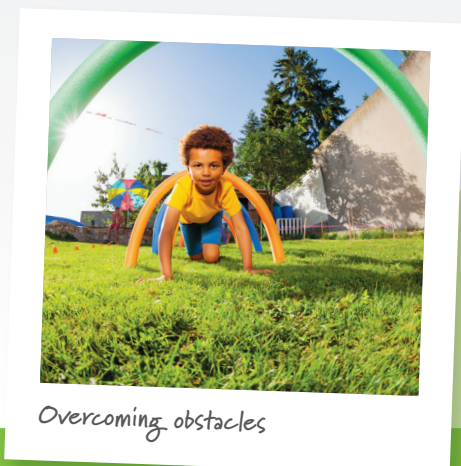
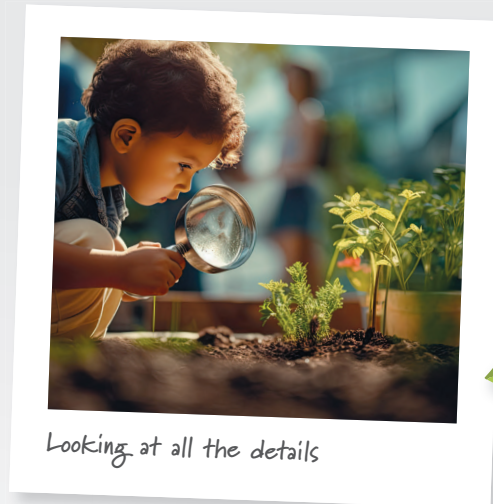
www.ndna.org.uk/underthree

Championing SEND

www.ndna.org.uk/ChampioningSEND

Everything your setting needs

www.hope-education.co.uk



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 2024 campaign and help keep your children happy and healthy.

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

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#HealthyBodyHappyMe

www.ndna.org.uk

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HP00053942



Square sections basket
HP00055740

Millhouse outdoor
cold frame
HP00056124



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HOPE
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