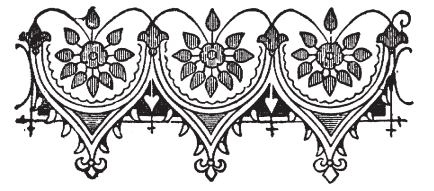


Home & Family



Make Way for Sociodramatic Play!



*Pamela Elmi, Founder & Director,
Robbinsville Extended Day*

Do you remember building forts out of seat cushions and blankets at home on a rainy day during your childhood? How about turning playground equipment into a spaceship, assembling your 'crew' on board with mere minutes left to save the human race? Perhaps you 'cured' your stuffed animals using a plastic doctor's kit, or used Monopoly money as currency in a makeshift store. These are all examples of sociodramatic play, an

integral piece in childhood development.

Sociodramatic play involves role-playing, where children imitate real-life people and experiences they've had themselves. Props, materials, imagination, and free-time recreate worlds for their enjoyment. Children can act out social situations and express their feelings about them. They can do this alone or in groups. It gives them a sense of control over the microcosm they have created.

Do you think today's children will have as many sociodramatic play experiences to look back upon as you do, or less? If your answer is 'less', then I encourage you to make way for MORE! Allow me to explain how we do this in the after school programs that I run. It can be easily duplicated at home:

- Limit the amount of time children are exposed to social media, smart phone use,

gaming, and television. (In R.E.D., we have 'Technology Tuesdays & Thursdays')

- Provide toys that are conducive to sociodramatic play. Costumes, play-kitchens, tools, doll houses, and stuffed animals. Yard sales and thrift stores are great places to shop.

- Make room for unscheduled free time. This gives children the relaxed opportunity to really engage in play and get lost in it; educators call this 'flow.'

- Allow the space for play to be undisturbed for a while. Sometimes their imaginary scenarios can evolve from one day to the next. Something to look forward to!

If you are lucky enough (as I am) to be invited by a child to engage in sociodramatic play, go for it! Just the other day, I was asked to step into a great

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dinosaur battle where the fate of the planet was hanging in the balance. Thank goodness my students had the right magic potion, perfect assembly of a block fortress, and the wherewithal to solve the problem. I followed their instructions and moved all of the

herbivores to higher ground. (Not an easy task when you have a dragon breathing purple fire on you.) It is because of all this, we are here today and I am able to write this article for you. Thank goodness for sociodramatic play!

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