

10
MINUTES

of *play*
can save you

20
MINUTES
of *nagging*

When things are stressful, play often goes out the window. But play is one of the very best ways to connect with children because it's their language. It's their world.

Dr. Lawrence Cohen, a licensed psychologist and bestselling author of Playful Parenting, says we all have inside of us an empty cup that needs to be filled and refilled in order for us to feel safe, to be happy, and to overcome hardships.

Often when children say “*Will you play with me,*” what they’re really saying is “*Fill my cup.*”

Unfortunately, our reaction as parents is often: *I don't have time, play is a luxury I can't afford right now.*

It's the same with what we see as misbehavior. For instance, when your child takes a toy from his sister, your child is not bad, your child is not trying to push your buttons, they just have an empty cup and they're trying to fill it.

This is why a few minutes of playtime makes a huge difference.

As Dr. Cohen says: 10 minutes of play can save you 20 minutes of nagging. Play will actually give you time in your life.

Many of the best games between parents and children are not only those that allow us to connect, but that also have some tension and drama.

NOTE: On the next two pages we have ideas for several playful, connection-based games. Print the pages and post them where you see them often. And give them a try over the next few days to fill up both your child's cup and your own!



Remember

If you feel like you don't have time for play, or that it feels like too much work, remember...

1. It's worth it!

2. Know that it's okay to throw this emotion into the game, as long as you're silly about it. You can say: “I hate this game, I can't believe we're playing the love gun game again. Okay, fine, we'll play again but please can I set a timer for five minutes please?” If you make fun of yourself and if you say it in a light enough way, your child is not going to feel insulted and you actually get to say the truth.



To learn more about playful parenting and for many more ideas for connection-based play, please take a look at Dr. Lawrence Cohen's Playful Parenting Masterclass available in The AFineParent Academy at <https://afineparent.com/academy>

Hide and seek

When little kids first start to play hide and seek, they want to be found right away. As kids get older, they want the tension of hiding and the joyful connection when they are finally found. Add a huge hug to the finding moment!

Chase and miss

A great game for drama. Repeat *"I want you, I'm coming for you, I'm going to get you,"* but then miss them. Try grabbing a chair and saying *"I've got you! Now that I've got you, I'm going to kiss you! Ew, it's a chair!"* Make it fun and make it silly.

Love Gun

When a child uses something as a gun (whether it's a toy gun or a stick) change it to a "love gun." When they shoot you, chase them around because you've been shot by the love gun and now you have to show lots of love.

Shakespearean Death Scene

(The Love Gun for older children)

If an older child "shoots" you, instead of just saying *"Ok, I'm dead, end of game,"* make it more playful. Say instead: *"Arrgh, you got me!"* Fall over on top of them so that there's body contact, more connection. Extend the scene, exaggerate it, keep flopping on top of them, and add a few tickles as you're "dying."



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Crack a love egg

When a child needs some loving attention, when their cup is running low, pretend to crack an egg on their head. Say “crack,” and then move your fingers so it feels like the egg is running down their head. Tell them it’s a love egg and that as it runs down them and spreads, you are spreading your love all over them.

Love Tug of War

Fight over your child with another person (the other parent, a grandparent, an aunt or uncle). Say “*I want her!*” “*No! I want her.*” “*I’ve got the best part, I’ve got the leg.*” “*I got her head so I can talk to her.*” This game is terrific for filling your child’s cup.

Lava game

For a game that includes a little bit of roughhousing, try the Lava Game, where you can’t get off the bed or the rug because the floor is lava. Get on the bed (or the rug) with your child and try to push each other into the lava, but also rescue each other from completely falling in. It becomes a game of conquer and rescue, with lots of great connection.



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Great Parents are Made, Not Born

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Here is a quick preview clip
of this masterclass:

If you cannot play this clip, please
copy-paste this link in your
browser:

<https://afineparent.com/lc-preview>



Here's what a mom in our AFineParent Academy community had to say:

“

I cannot express how grateful I am to you for these masterclasses. Just the few I have watched so far have helped my family so much. I knew what I didn't want to do anymore as a parent and was struggling with what to do instead. These masterclasses have been spot on for who I want to be as a parent. Thank you so much!

- Jen C



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