

The Importance of Playing at a Park

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By: Koryssa Rosenquist MOT, OTR/L

The big ol' giant purple slide that was up so high and swirled down and down and down, or the green swing that swung me so high I felt like I was on top of the world. Those are a couple of my childhood memories at the park. Can you think back to yours? Does your child have a favorite at the park?

There are so many opportunities right in front of our eyes to get our children outdoors and to a park, but in today's society we know that a variety of factors can sometimes get in the way of that. However, there are so many importance's of taking your children to the park. Here are just a few:

1. Gross motor skills
 - Children engage in a variety of gross motor skills such as: pushing, pulling, climbing, running, etc. Also, climbing up the ladders, across the monkey bars, and walking across the balance beam help develop upper body/lower body strength, core strength, balance skills, body coordination, overall hand-eye coordination, and grasping skills necessary for handwriting and utensil use to name a few.
2. Social skills
 - Children learn to share, communicate, and engage with others
 - Make new friends
 - Build ideas off one another and imaginary play

Skill Development at a Park

- Gross Motor Skills
- Social Skills
- Executive Functioning
- Sensory

3. Executive Functioning Skills

- Executive functioning skills are one's ability to plan, organize, problem solve, and execute the plan, and regulate emotions just to name a few. At the park there are a variety of activities that can help facilitate these skills. An example could be: creating obstacle courses and coming up with a plan with a peer and then being able to execute that plan.

4. Sensory skills

- The park provides a variety of sensory experiences for kids. Swings, merry-go-rounds, and swirly slides provide vestibular input. This plays an important part in a child's development, because it provides a child information about where their body is in space which is important for balance, motor coordination and bilateral coordination.
- Climbing, jumping, hanging, and heavy work activities provide proprioceptive input which is a key factor in providing a child with a sense of body awareness.
- The tactile system is also stimulated by a variety of factors at the park such as different textures, dirt, sand, etc.

There are so many important factors that come into play while at the park. Yes, kids get a lot of gross motor movement out of it, but there is also a big social and sensory component to it as well. Let's get our kiddos to the park more often.

