Intervention/Training Module on Enhancing Play Skills of Children with Autism
“What I hear, I forget.
What I see, I remember.
What I do, I understand.”

- Confucius
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Why is Play Important?

Children learn as they play. Most importantly, in play children learn how to learn. Play is the optimum learning relationship for a child. The best learners at whatever age or stage of development are those that are best prepared to handle change. As they explore their world, children's play presents them with the fundamental relationships with which they acquire the basic feelings, ideas and capacities to effectively absorb from and adapt to the ever-changing world around them for the rest of their lives.
What are the benefits of play in a child's life?

A child who has been allowed to develop play resources receives many enduring advantages. First, he/she develops a universal learning skill. Second, play maximizes his/her potential by developing his/her creativity and imagination. Third, his/her relationships with the world and others are based on loving-kindness. Fourth, play promotes joy, which is essential for self-esteem and health. Fifth, his/her learning process is self-sustained based as it is on his/her own natural love of learning and playful engagement with life. Sixth, play creates a basic trust in the world.

Emotional-Behavioural Benefits

- Reduces fear, anxiety, stress, irritability
- Creates joy, intimacy, self-esteem and mastery not based on other's loss of esteem
- Improves emotional flexibility and openness
- Increases calmness, resilience and adaptability and ability to deal with surprise and change
- Decreases tactile defensiveness
- Healing process for hurts
Social Benefits

- Enhances feelings of acceptance of difference
- Increases empathy, compassion, and sharing
- Creates options and choices
- Models relationships based on inclusion rather than exclusion
- Alternative to aggressor-victim model of relationships
- Decreases revenge and need for self defense
- Improves touch and nonverbal socialization skills
- Increases attention and attachment capacities

Bio-Physical Benefits

- Positive emotions increase the efficiency of immune, endocrine, and cardiovascular systems
- Decreases stress, fatigue, injury, and depression
- Increases range of motion, agility, coordination, balance, flexibility, vestibular and proprioceptive motion, and fine and gross motor exploration
- Integrates sensori-motor, kinesthetic and emotional responses
What is the importance of games?

- Playing games is an important activity for the child's social and mental development. Educational games are important for keeping the child interested in learning. For example some games come with educational skills and academic contests, such as spelling.
- Through games your child can also learn about teamwork. Games teach him/her about sportsmanship. Through these games, he/she can create critical thinking.
- Games create courage and inspire your child to prove himself/herself as the best at what he/she does. It teaches him/her how to make quick decisions and how to work well under pressure.

- Games teach your child about what is good and bad and gives him/her a chance to learn more about people, animals and countries.
- Games have much significance in healthy child development. Games allow and encourage him/her to process information and to make sense of his/her own world.
- Some games also teach the child how to add, subtract, divide and multiply which is good for his/her mental development.
Some games are completely based on fitness. Through these games the child learns how to keep fit and healthy. He/she can also learn about skipping, walking and kicking. Some games create a sense of construction. Recreational games such as board games increase mental and physical skills.

- Computer games can also help the child develop his/her computer skills. For example, between the ages of 3-4 years, the child can play moving square game and colour matching. Through these games, he/she can learn how to move the mouse in order to catch a moving square and match colours.
- Jumping block game is also available for a child between the ages of 4-5 years. He/she can learn how to change a block by clicking the mouse.
- Between the ages of 5-6 years he/she can play moving image game. This teaches him/her how to change the direction or scene by clicking a computer mouse.

Benefits of games for children with autism

Children with autism may have trouble with developmental skills that affect social interaction, communication, movement or problem solving. Social skills activities can provide a way to improve these areas in a fun manner. Game play can improve the following areas:

- **Cognitive**: Games can assist memory, problem-solving, deduction and planning skills.
- **Language**: Many games can improve vocabulary skills.
- **Maths**: Children can practise counting, learn to recognize numbers and engage in math with game play.
- **Social**: Games with multiple players encourage social skills and communication skills. Children with autism who prefer isolation may be willing to work with others during a game activity. The preset rules also teach children how to share with others, take turns and win in a fair competition or lose without a tantrum.
• **Motor:** A number of games provide opportunities to sharpen fine and gross motor skills such as hand and eye coordination and balance.

• **Sensory processing:** Many children with autism have sensory processing issues. Some games help stimulate senses such as playing with water balloons, guessing objects by touch, singing games or playing Musical Chairs, which may improve sensory disorders by engaging different senses during game play.

“We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing”

George Bernard Shaw

This play manual is a collection of 25 games. In this manual one can learn about and see demonstration of different kinds of social play for children with autism. These games have engaged and delighted many persons, many children with autism, as well as parents, siblings and friends. The collections are arranged so that you can see how similar games can be made very simple for players who are very new at social play and then gradually made more complex for children who are becoming more adept at social play.

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**Tips for selecting games**

Consider the following tips when selecting an activity games for children with autism:

• **Level of impairment:** Choose activities that are appropriate for your loved one's level of impairment. If the child with autism requires special assistance to participate in the activity, make sure that the activity organizer can provide the right support services.

• **Interests:** Select activities that interest the child with autism. If he has a favourite subject, find activities that match his interest in order to encourage participation and maximize activity benefits.
• **Daily activities:** Encourage language, communication and social skill improvement in all daily activities by providing an example of ideal social behaviour, encouraging eye contact and maintaining a strict routine.

• **Inclusion or special needs activities:** Determine if the autistic child will thrive in an inclusive activity with non-autistic people or in a special needs environment. Proponents of inclusive environments claim that people with autism improve by modeling themselves after their non-autistic peers. Research each activity and think about how your loved one will fit into the environment.

Games should allow both play partners to...

• **Enjoy being together and being involved in the same activity:** This means that very simple games can be the best games of all! Don’t think complicated, think fun!

• **Notice facial expressions, gestures, and body movements:** You must watch in order to share emotions and learn information as you play. You watch to make sure your child is understanding and enjoying what you are doing.

• **Your child needs to be watching you as well:** In order to help your child watch you better, you may need to hold communication gestures longer, be more dramatic, and draw attention to important emotional communication signals so that your child does not miss them.

• **Be responsive to one another:** This means looking together at things, looking at each other and taking turns reacting to whatever the other did last. All this can happen with facial expressions, gestures, sounds, songs, words, with or without toys.

• **Choosing Games:** Both play partners should know how to get a game started. Give each game a name and use this name even if the game evolves into something different over time. If your child is not yet talking, use objects or pictures to help your child learn to communicate the desire to play a particular game.
• **Communicate for many different reasons as you play:** Think of games as involving activities where you practice different kinds of communication. You can play games where you practice calling, telling, teasing, worrying, wondering, explaining, remembering, analyzing, rejecting, joking, and pretending.

• **Include physical movement in games:** Move together across space and stay together as you move.

• **Share memories:** This can be done by taking a photo, recording a video, or making a journal to record exciting things that you do together. You can remember how much fun, how scary, how hard, how cool, how funny activities are that you do together.

• **Help your child learn to persist when communication fails:** When communication fails, many children with autism become highly self-directed, or just leave the situation or, in the worst case, have an emotional meltdown. Think of these events as Communication Breakdowns.

• **Gradually teach mental flexibility:** Games will need to have structure so that your child can understand and participate but ultimately, you want your child to be able to vary the game and enjoy your variations.

• **Allow anyone to stop playing when it is not fun anymore:** You need to stop playing when you get tired because otherwise, you will convey that you are not having fun. Your child needs to stop playing when he or she stops having fun because your child will not want to play with you next time if you don't stop when the fun is over. So, when the fun is over on any one play session, stop. It is play.
GAME 1

Title of the game: FLYING SAUCERS
Purpose: To teach fine motor skills.
Age: 6 to 10 years
Materials Required: Paper plates, paper cups, scotch tape and crayons
Where: Outdoor
Procedure: Begin by helping the children cut the cups in half. Take the bottom half of the cup and cut small slits along the cut edge, and then bend them out to make flaps. Fasten the cup with tape to the top of a paper plate. Finally help them to cut slits along the edge of the paper plate, and fold each one alternately forwards or backwards. This will help saucer fly better. They can use crayons or markers to create their own unique alien spacecraft! Take the saucers outside and see who's alien craft can go the farthest! It will take some practice; it only takes a gentle flick of the wrist to launch. My youngest beat the older two every time!
GAME - 2

Title of the game : DONKEY
Purpose : To teach gross motor and attention.
Age : 5 years and above
Materials Required : Tennis ball and smooth wall
Where : Outdoor
Procedure : Line children up about 6 to 10 feet away from the wall. The person who is “it” will throw the tennis ball against the wall, trying to hit one of the other children when it rebounds. The children in line must jump or move out of the way, to keep from getting hit! When someone is hit they gain a letter, eventually spelling “Donkey”. Whenever the word Donkey is spelled, this person is out. Time the game, and the child who has the least number of letters is the winner. Make sure everyone gets a turn to be “it”.
GAME -3

Title of the game : FIND THE BELL
Purpose : To train in auditory skills
Age : 6 to 10 years
Materials Required : Blind folder and bell
Where : Outdoor
Procedure : Blindfold all the players except one, this person is "it". The person who is "it" must ring the bell at all times, while the others try to find and tag the bell ringer. The bell ringer can try to move and not be tagged! Lots of fun to watch!!
GAME 4

Title of the game : BALLOON SQUASH
Purpose : To teach team spirit and adjustability
Age : 6 to 10 years
Materials Required : Bag of balloons, can of shaving cream, 2 buckets and old clothing or bathing suits.
Where : Outdoor
Procedure : Fill one balloon per player with shaving cream, you may need some extras due to accidental popping! Divide the group into two equal teams. Place balloons in buckets and have each team move equal distances away from the buckets. When the signal is given a player on each team runs to the bucket, takes a balloon and sits on balloon until it pops. Then they can run back and tag the next team member, until they have popped all their balloons. The first team to pop all their balloons and sit down wins!!
GAME - 5

Title of the game : CRISS CROSS
Purpose : To encourage gross and fine motor skills.
Age : 8 to 14 years
Materials Required : -
Where : Outdoor
Procedure : Need at least four or more players. Divide into four equal groups and mark out a large square in the yard. Have each team or child go to a separate corner of the square. Object of the game is to see who can get to the opposite (diagonal) corner the fastest, using the method called out by the leader-usually the parent! The leader could call out hopping or crab walk, etc. Can get very crowded in the middle! Keep score of which team or individual wins each crossing. The first team or person to 5 wins.
GAME -6

Title of the game : FILL UP THE BOTTLE
Purpose : To teach attention and team work.
Age : 5 to 14 years
Materials Required : 2 plastic bottles, paper cups, and bucket full of water
Where : Outdoor
Procedure : Set up two different teams, and have one person on each team lay on the ground with the plastic bottle held on their forehead. Then their team members will have to run across to the bucket of water, fill their cup, and come back to pour their cup of water into the bottle while standing up straight. To win the bottle will have to be totally filled and the person with the bottle must run to the finish line without spilling the water out of the bottle. If you aren't afraid of getting a bit wet, this game can be great fun.
GAME -7

Title of the game: DRESS UP RELAY RACE

Purpose: To teach imitation skills

Age: 9 to 14 years

Materials Required: Baskets, adult pants, shirts, shoes and hats.

Where: Outdoor

Procedure: The children will need to get fully dressed in the clothes, race to the other end of the room, and give the clothes to a fellow team mate to put on. After they have the clothes on, they race back for another team member to put the clothes on. The team which finishes first wins the game.
GAME -8

Title of the game : BALLOON BURST
Purpose : To teach motor skills.
Age : 5 to 14 years
Materials Required : Balloons and piece of papers
Where : Outdoor
Procedure : For this game you will need enough balloons for each child. In all the balloons, place a blank piece of paper. Pass out the balloons and have the children try and burst them, any way they can. The child that burst the balloon with the paper that says 'burst' is the winner of the game.
GAME - 9

Title of the game : TREASURE HUNT

Purpose : To encourage group cooperation, problem solving, following directions, thinking and reasoning.

Age : 5 years and above

Materials Required : Small plastic gold coins, inexpensive beaded necklaces, small rings, play money, and a treasure box decorated by the children. A map made by the teacher for the children to follow. Inexpensive treasures that can be found in any party store.

Where : Outdoor

Procedure : The teacher must first hide the treasure filled box in a good hiding place in the yard. Next, the teacher will prepare a creative map for the children to follow, i.e. outside, start at the tree in the bike area. Look up and find another clue. The second clue might have a rhyme or just say now walk twenty five steps until you come to the playhouse, etc. Finally when the children come to the place where the treasure is buried or hidden, they will open it and take turns sharing the treasure inside. It’s great fun and always a success!
GAME -10

Title of the game : MEMORY GAME
Purpose : This is a good activity for children to make and play. It helps their memory and visual skills. It is also good for developing fine motor skills. Children try to match the game pieces that are the same. You can have one or more players.
Age : 5 to 14 years
Materials Required : Metal juice can lids, stickers, small pictures, buttons or other small objects and paper
Where : Indoor and Outdoor
Procedure : In advance teachers take the juice can lids and place a sticker on each lid (make two of each kind). The children can help with this activity. After you have made 5-10 different pairs, the children can play the memory game. Just turn the lids over so the pictures are on the bottom. Try and match each pair of pictures.
Title of the game: MUSICAL CHAIR
Purpose: To teach concentration, listening and turn taking Skills.
Age: 5 to 14 years
Materials Required: Chairs, Tape recorder/ CD player, Audio tape/ CD
Where: Outdoor & Indoor
Procedure: Put several chairs in a circle with their backs inside. The number of the chairs must be less by one than the number of the players. As the music plays the players walk round the chairs. As the music stops, the players try to take their places on the chairs. The player who hasn't taken the place is out. After that take away one chair (as the number of players became less by one). The player who remains the last in the game is the winner.
GAME -12
Title of the game : BOTTLE BOWLING
Purpose : To teach motor skills and teamwork.
Age : 8 to 14 years
Materials Required : Empty Soda bottles
Where : Outdoor
Procedure : Line the bottles up in a row. Divide the number of children in to two groups, one group standing on either side of the bottles at a distance. Each team gets a chance to try and knock down the bottles as quickly as they can. The teacher times the children and names the winner.
GAME -13

Title of the game : CROSS THE RIVER
Purpose : To teach cooperation
Age : 5 to 14 years
Materials Required : A piece of chalk
Where : Outdoor
Procedure : Divide the number of children into teams. In front of each team, mark out two straight lines four yards long. The first child from each team stands on one foot at the start of the river and hops alongside it. The team leaders must continue in this way all down the river. Any player who touches the river or who puts his other foot down has to drop out. The first player to reach the end of his river gets a point for the team. When all players have had their turns, the team which has gained most points is the winner.
**GAME -14**

**Title of the game**: FROG IN THE MIDDLE  
**Purpose**: To teach imitation skills  
**Age**: 5 to 14 years  
**Materials Required**: -  
**Where**: Outdoor and Indoor  
**Procedure**: One child sits in the centre of a circle. The other children run around her/him shouting, “Frog in the sea can’t catch me”. They tantalizingly dare the child in the centre to touch them. When the frog does succeed in catching a child, the child who is caught, is made the new frog, in the middle. This game can go on till all but one child is caught. She/he is the winner.
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>5 to 14 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Materials Required</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where</td>
<td>Indoor and Outdoor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>The children are seated in a circle. Each child is named after a bird/animal. The teacher sits in the centre of the circle. She tells stories in which the names of the birds/animals given to the children, appear. When the names of the birds/animals are mentioned in the course of the story, the child who has been given that name has to act like that particular bird/animal. The best performance is applauded.</td>
</tr>
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GAME -16

Title of the game : ACT UP
Purpose : To encourage motor skills.
Age : 8 to 14 years
Materials Required : -
Where : Indoor and Outdoor
Procedure : One child is selected to catch the others. Other children are asked to stand separately. The catcher has to first act like a duck/frog/rabbit. All the children have to start running. Thereafter, the catcher child chases the other children and catches one. The caught child has to act like a duck/frog/rabbit. Those children who have already acted cannot be caught again. Thus each child gets one chance to act as a catcher. The child who acts and remains uncaught till the end is the winner.
GAME -17

Title of the game : WHO IS KNOCKING?
Purpose : To teach attention, listening and social skills.
Age : 8 to 14 years
Materials Required : Plate and spoon
Where : Indoor and Outdoor

Procedure : All players sit in a circle. One child sits in the middle, blindfolded. Each child goes in turn behind the child in the centre and makes a sound with a plate and a spoon. When the child in the centre hears the sound, he asks: "Who is knocking?"
The child who knocks can recite a line from a rhyme or song, or describe the type of dress worn by him/her. The child in the centre has to guess who is knocking, by recognizing the sound of the knocker's voice. If she/he guesses right, his/her place in the centre is taken up by the knocker. The correct guesses are applauded.
GAME - 18

Title of the game : THROW IN
Purpose : To teach social and concentration, turn taking skills.
Age : 5 to 14 years
Materials Required : Rubber balls and buckets
Where : Outdoor
Procedure : Divide the number of children in to two teams. Give each team names of flowers/alphabets/colours. Allot one bucket and equal number of rubber balls to each team. Keep the balls in separate containers at a starting point. Place the buckets at a distance of three to four feet from the starting point. Give a signal. Then ask each team to collect the balls and put them in the allotted buckets. Count the number of balls in each bucket along with the children. The team that puts the maximum number of balls into their bucket is applauded.
GAME -19

Title of the game     : GUESSING GAME
Purpose               : To train in sensory and memory skills.
Age                   : 5 to 14 years
Materials Required    : Block, cup, blind folder
Where                 : Indoor and Outdoor
Procedure             : Have your child blind folded and hand him/her a simple object or toy, like a block or a cup. Tell him/her to feel the object and have him/her describe it to you (if he is verbal). If your child is non-verbal, have him/her show you a picture of the object after he opens his/her eyes. This game helps children use senses other than vision to learn about the world around them.
GAME -20

Title of the game : SPOT YOUR COLOUR
Purpose : To teach team work and social skills.
Age : 5 to 14 years
Materials Required : Objects in colours of red, green and yellow
Where : Indoor and Outdoor
Procedure : Divide the number of players into three teams. Call them 'Red team', 'Green team' and 'Yellow team'. Ask each team to look for objects of their respective colour, which are hidden (by you) in various places inside the classroom. The team that collects five objects first, is declared the winner.
# GAME -21

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<tr>
<th><strong>Title of the game</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>To teach motor skills and turn taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>8 to 14 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Materials Required</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where</strong></td>
<td>Indoor and Outdoor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Procedure</strong></td>
<td>The children sit at their desks. The teacher chooses seven children to be “it.” Then the teacher says, “Thumbs up.” The children who are sitting down rest their faces on their folded arms so they cannot see. They make a fist, with one thumb sticking up. The children who are “it” tip-toe quietly and touch someone on the thumb. Then they go back in front of the class. The teacher calls, “Seven up.” Everyone looks up. The children who were touched try to guess who touched their thumb. If the child guesses right, she or he gets to be “it” and the other child sits down.</td>
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</table>
GAME -22

Title of the game : LAND WATER
Purpose : To teach social and gross motor skills.
Age : 5 to 14 years
Materials Required : -
Where : Indoor and Outdoor
Procedure : This is a game for attentive players. On hearing the word "land" the players jump forward, on hearing the word "water" backward. Then the word "land" is suddenly changed into "bank". The actions of the players must be the same as after the word "land". The word "water" may be changed into "sea", "lake", "river", etc. The player who often mistakes is out.
GAME -23

Title of the game: CAT AND MOUSE
Purpose: To teach motor skills.
Age: 5 to 14 years
Materials Required: -
Where: Indoor and Outdoor

Procedure: Select someone to become the “Mouse” and someone to be the “Cat.” Have the rest of the class form a circle while holding hands. Instruct the children that no matter what, they have to remain holding hands. The “Mouse” goes inside the circle and the “Cat” goes outside the circle. The “Mouse” goes in and out of the circle under the players arms while the “Cat” tries to tag him/her. The “Cat” cannot go in the circle. When the “Mouse” gets tagged he becomes the new “Cat” and the first “Cat” joins the children. Another child gets to be the Mouse.
### GAME -24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the game</th>
<th>DUCK, DUCK, GOOSE!</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>To teach turn taking, listening and motor skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>5 to 14 years</td>
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<td>Materials Required</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where</td>
<td>Outdoor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>Everyone sits in a circle on the floor. One person is the &quot;goose&quot; and the rest are the &quot;ducks.&quot; The goose walks around the outside of the circle, patting each duck on the head and saying &quot;Duck.&quot; The player touches someone's head and says, &quot;Goose!&quot; The tagged duck gets up and chases the goose around the circle. The goose tries to get back around to the empty seat and sit down before being tagged. If successful, the goose rejoins the seated ducks and the new goose now starts the game again. If the first goose is tagged, he or she sits in the center of the circle as the game goes on. As more people get tagged, the circle gets tighter and the chase gets tighter! The last person standing is the goose.</td>
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GAME -25

Title of the game : VEGETABLE/FRUIT TAG
Purpose : To teach attention and turn taking skills.
Age : 5 to 14 years
Materials Required : Vegetable/Fruit
Where : Indoor and Outdoor
Procedure : When a tagger approaches a child in this game, he or she must squat down and say the name of a vegetable or fruit for protection. If the tagger gets you first, you also become “it.”