

# From the Sandpit to Adulthood

## 10 keys to raising children who flourish

1. Relax babies and their world
2. The hunger for safe touch and repetition
3. The need for silence, stillness and calmness
4. The power of the puddle and the sandpit
5. The secrets of play
6. The drive for human connectedness
7. Building resilience matters
8. Nurturing the spirit of our children
9. Adolescence and nurturing potential
10. Everybody matters – no matter what

“Many children played and learned in the streets, woods and fields without the looming presence of adults and albeit well meaning coaches. Their experiences were real, varied and enormously engaging.

“These hands on or concrete experiences with the real world prepared the brain for learning. What may have seemed to be unstructured play had a very serious purpose. It allowed children to discover the underlying rules and patterns that organize and make sense of the world. It may have set up a filing system for the storage and retrieval of information. Many of today’s children are starved of real life experiences.”

— Terrence Parry & Gayle Gregory, *Designing Brain Compatible Learning* (2006).

## Play

Through the lens of play research... there is a direct line between play deficiencies and some frightening public health and social trends:

- Tragic obesity statistics
- 4.5 million children with ADHD
- Childhood depression
- Problems in classrooms
- Increasing bullying, aggression and violence
- Inability to interact with peers

“Without plenty of natural movement babies and toddlers run the risk of experiencing developmental delays in all areas of their life. Movement is not just about the physical body it is a very sophisticated necessity for developing healthy brains, healthy minds and nurturing the socio-cultural development of every human being.” — Maggie Dent

## Solo play

- Parallel play
- Independent play
- Autonomous play
- Imaginative play
- Adult-directed play
- Child-directed play
- Competitive play
- Adventuresome play
- Risky play
- Absorbed play
- Nature play
- Project based play

## 4 steps to nurturing toddler genius

1. Pause and become present.
2. Ask: "Did you do that all by yourself?"
3. Explanation why the choice you would prefer they didn't make again.
4. Have them clean up the mess.

## SEPARATION CAN BE BRIDGED – building love bridges

### Deep connection

- Deep connection to self
  - Deep connection to another
  - Deep connection to community
  - Deep connection to lineage
  - Deep connection to nature
  - Deep Connection to a higher power
- Source: Rachael Kessler, *The Soul of Education* (2000).

### Micro-moments of connection

- Parents can give small symbols to hold onto in their absence
  - Use rituals like kissing hand/bedtime rituals
  - Captured kisses
  - Winking, nodding, eye contact
  - Singing family favourites
  - Have lots of family photos around
  - Join kids drawing, colouring in
  - Spontaneous hugging, tickling
  - Record readable stories.
  - Bite out of sandwich, toast
  - Notes in lunch box, mirrors
  - Surprise bedroom attack
- Maggie Dent, *9 Things* (2014).

## Silence and stillness and stress

Children and adolescents today are bombarded with stimulation in every area of their lives. Overstimulation contributes to emotional overwhelm, anxiety, stress, poor sleep and impaired learning.

[Self-regulation is a key to succeeding at school and life.](#)

### What helps?

Music, drama, sport, time in nature, safe touch, real play, reading, self calming strategies, mindfulness, loving relationships with consistent caregivers.

### What doesn't?

TV, iPads, tablets, video games, passivity, too much stress and pressure and stress on children, poor food and not enough sleep. – Dr Stuart Shanker ([www.self-reg.ca/](http://www.self-reg.ca/))

## Nurturing the Spirit

- ✓ Allow imagination and wonder to be a part of children's lives.
- ✓ Develop a strong connection to the natural world.
- ✓ Ensure the arts are part of childhood—singing, dancing, music, painting, make-believe.
- ✓ Have special rituals and family moments
- ✓ Build their sense of humour
- ✓ Honour the sacredness of life
- ✓ Faith, belief in something greater
- ✓ Build strong connections and belonging in communities
- ✓ Value childhood as important

"Students who feel deeply connected don't need danger to feel fully alive. They don't need guns to feel powerful. They don't want to hurt others or themselves. Out of connection grows compassion and passion — passion for people, for students' goals and dreams, for life itself."

— Rachael Kessler, *The Soul of Education* (2000).

## Main Drivers in Adolescence

- ✓ Seeking autonomy
- ✓ Identity searching
- ✓ Needing to belong
- ✓ Immature brain driving mature looking body
- ✓ Separating from parents
- ✓ Forming relationships

## Lighthouses

All adolescents need lots of support and encouragement to navigate the bumpy ride to adulthood - Lighthouses are essential.



[www.maggiedent.com](http://www.maggiedent.com)

**Maggie Dent**  
quietly improving lives

© Maggie Dent 2020