USDA Forest Service

Urban Forest Connections

Second Wednesdays | 1:00 – 2:15 pm ET

www.fs.fed.us/research/urban-webinars

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
LET THEM CLIMB TREES! THE DECLINE OF PLAY OUTDOORS AND THE RISE OF SENSORY ISSUES

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LET THEM CLIMB TREES!

The decline of play outdoors and the rise in sensory issues

By Angela Hanscom, MOT, OTR/L
Rise of Sensory & Motor Issues

- Decreased attention
- Fidgeting
- Decreased strength
- Poor posture
- Decreased stamina
- Frail
- Falling
- Endless Colds
- Increased aggression
- Trouble reading
- Emotional
- Rise in anxiety
- Children not playing
The Big Divide

- Less prepared than ever before
- Yes we are expecting MORE
- Increased coding
- Increased children getting reading services, etc.
Two Major Changes

- Increase Technology
- Decrease Time Outdoors *
  - Children spend a lot of time at school
  - Advocates for outdoor play
  - Carry-over to home environments
I’m here to tell you....

to do everything in your power to get kids outdoors!
The Vestibular System

- Feeds into the limbic system – center for emotions
- Turns brain on to pay attention
- Why kids fidget
- We are saying, “don’t spin,” “get down from that tree,” “be careful”
- Kids are becoming more and more unsafe
Right and surprisingly wrong ways to get kids moving

- Bouncy balls, fidgets, and movement discs
- Not enough movement
- Not fully engaging the senses
- Outdoors offers both
The Right Kind of Movement

- Effects of Daily Restrictions on Children
  - Always in an upright position
    - Don’t just run (running groups)
    - Spin, go upside down, roll, climb
  - Develop the vestibular system
The Proprioceptive System

- Tag
- Kids of the past vs. today
Nature is the Ultimate Sensory Experience

- Engages all the senses
- Man Made vs. Nature
This?  or  This?
This? or This?
Nature is Therapeutic

- Fosters Listening
- Improves Visual Skills
- Enhances the Sense of Touch
- Going Barefoot
- Playing in the Dark
Recess

- Remember?
Importance of Free Play
Ways to Enhance the Play Experience

- Adults Step Back
- Extend the time
- Fewer Rules
- Loose Parts
- Free to get dirty
Questions?