

Connection

Once the very young child has achieved some independence in movement, he or she can look with growing interest towards others outside the family. These early meetings are at the beginning of a life long journey of learning about being a member of a society and are greatly influenced by our initial experience of loving connection.

The theme of connecting is very prominent in childhood play.

It is represented by children; who wish to play the same game, who follow the leader or lead the follower, who agree to wear unique dress-ups, who take on a role as a member of a play family and who change their behaviour to suit a shared theme.



"I am making electricity for everyone"

Tying as a Feature of Connection Play

Children discover tying as a means of joining one thing with another, in imitation of adults, but also quite naturally when playing freely. Tying in a range of ways assists the child playing with connection themes.

From early times onward, human beings in many different cultures tie, knot, weave and wind. These are basic living skills which have always aided survival. With ready access to materials such as scarves and ties, modern children will play with holding things together.

Tying helps the playing child to carry, travel and connect with others further away.



Colourful scarves, ties, rope, wool and threads generally attract the child who may wish to keep two things together - a stick to a rope, or a rope to a table leg, for example.

Children will build imaginatively using expanding tying skills to connect furniture and other props found in most homes.



In attempting to knot, a child might first discover winding around and around. Things wound together may stay together satisfactorily, if only for a little while.

Winding to secure two things together, holding and tying a bunch of things together, knotting and twisting, finger knitting and plaiting, are all skills that can be mastered by children, step by step. These are construction skills that enhance the child's ability to connect symbolically in play.



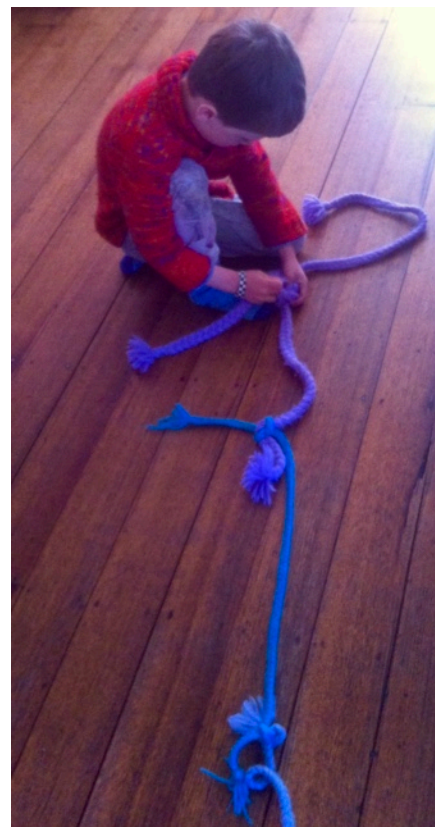
Supporting Tying Play at Home

Once tying a simple single knot (with a thick plaited rope) around a bar is mastered, double knots quickly follow.

If you are asked to tie something for a child, see if they can try to do it themselves first - or you can demonstrate slowly in front of them so that they can see exactly what you are doing.

Set up some special hooks or a chair, a spot for the child's use of ropes, scarves, or ties. The child at play can then have lots of practice at winding and tying.

A bow follows the knot in complexity.



Untying is an even more advanced skill that will necessarily follow winding, knotting and tying bows.



Children who enjoy dressing up play creatively, tying clothes for each other. Pre-sewn elastic aids sewn to colourful cloths can support the children who are working on developing the skills to tie their own creations.

Imaginative dressing up is greatly enriched by the ability to tie.



Tying and Self Care

If there is a need for a skill in daily living as well as in play, there will be many opportunities to reinforce gradual learning. The child who is striving for independence will welcome any opportunity to demonstrate their newly found competence.



Some children sit or watch, patiently learning to tie their shoelaces.

Once the bow is mastered, children often tie their own apron and with delight realise that they can tie and untie a bow magically, behind their back!



Play Building is Enhanced by the Ability to Tie



Untying

At the end of play adults help by joining in packing up. Children may need support for the untying of all the knots and tangles. After winding all the ropes around hands, leave them in little smooth bundles laid out on a big flat basket for next time or they may be stored over a bar.

An aesthetic collection will inspire the next play session

Respectful unobtrusive adults can sit near players and untie knots in ropes that have been discarded. This adult activity has been known to silently help with any “knotty behaviour”. The adult only intervenes in the child’s frustrations if really necessary.

Connection and Gift Giving

Another way all humans connect with each other is by the giving and receiving of gifts. Children often play at gift giving which is a very happy part of their life experience.

When adults give gifts they can be mindful of the importance of enhancing imaginative, self propelled, free play. By being kind to the child and the environment they set the example for the child's gift giving. The wrapping and tying of gifts so that a secret can be revealed at a special time is an important part of the idea of delighting others with a present.



IDEAS FOR PRESENTS

- Small, nicely cut sticks for play and tying into stickmen. Stick men can be dressed with wool winding and even have leaf wings.
- Long scarves or silk ties for dressing up and joining things
- Op-shop coloured sheets and curtains. (Tie plaited play ropes on the corners for an easy playhouse roof.)
- Smaller cloths for dressing up and decorating.
- Wooden curtain rings of different sizes for tying through and decorative building.
- Thick and thin beautifully coloured wool
- The child's own scissors and a special bag with a handle to hang them somewhere safe.



Taking into account the child's age and inclination, adults can avoid the toy shops and gather props that can really enhance imaginative play and the acquisition of general life skills.



Connection and the Shared Play Theme

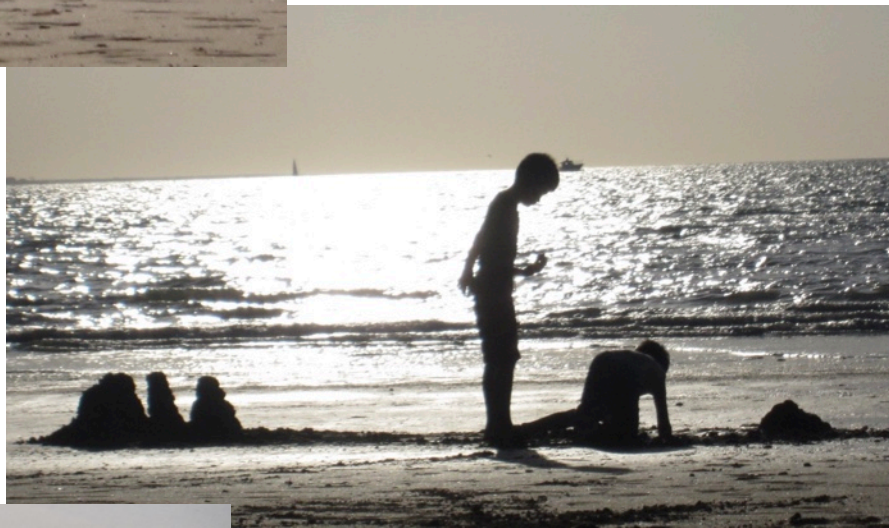
An archetypal play theme generally is like an unspoken language that connects all children; playing house, making mixtures, trading play, hiding, chasing, and following the leader.

Within the shared play theme however some symbols are very specific. Sticks, stones and other natural materials may be arranged to mark our belonging together or our exclusion of others. Fencing, defining borders and guarding are childhood activities that may be accompanied by verbal invitation or words of exclusion; “We have capes”, “You’re with me right?”, “You can be the sister” “We are camping”, “No boys allowed”.



Trench connections

Two boys digging at the water's edge notice each other and, after consultation, dig a channel connecting their originally separate castles.



Encampment

On another day, in far away city, at a different beach, more children play with belonging and borders.

Unspoken agreements connect players

Stick connections

In a kindergarten room young imaginative players make tables into boats. Silk scarves are tied onto sticks and become decorative flags. The players lay sticks to connect each boat one to the other.

When they want to ride on a different boat, the children imitate swimming by scrambling on their tummies across the carpet staying close to the sticks stretching from boat to boat.



In a public reserve many children, as well as their parents and the park ranger, respect and continue to enjoy, the play of the original builders of this big inviting bush house.

