Parenting Revolution

Toddler Edition

Parenting Revolution **– Toddler Edition**
SESSION 6:

Brain Development

ACTIVITY SHEET

Between the ages of 1 and 3, your toddler's brain is developing at a rapid rate. In fact, a toddler's brain is about twice as active as that of a University student, and already weighs about 80% of its eventual adult size. By understanding the perceptual, language and sensory developmental processes of your toddler's brain, you can help facilitate even greater learning. This session encourages creative play to help your child sustain attention, overcome anxiety and develop problem-solving skills.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND OBJECTIVES SUMMARY

This session is designed to help you:

(a) understand how neurons fire and wire in the brain to form neural pathways

(b) harness the power of imagination and play to facilitate learning

(c) Encourage your toddler as they develop perceptual, language and sensory processing skills

Object Permanence

Between 9-12 months of age, a developmental milestone known as 'Object Permanence' begins developing. Object permanence is your toddler's ability to create a mental representation (known as a 'schema') of an object - so that even if an object is hidden, they know it still exists. Object permanence helps your child to start to understand the world around them, helps them to develop skills for imaginative play and abstract thinking, as well as serving to reduce separation anxiety.

Consider the following activities that help cultivate object permanence:

PEEKABOO
(hiding and revealing your face)

PUT AN OBJECT BEHIND YOUR BACK
(ask where it's gone)

PLAY HIDE-AND-GO-SEEK
(take turns to hide and find)

WALK OUT OF YOUR CHILD'S SIGHT
(but continue talking to them)
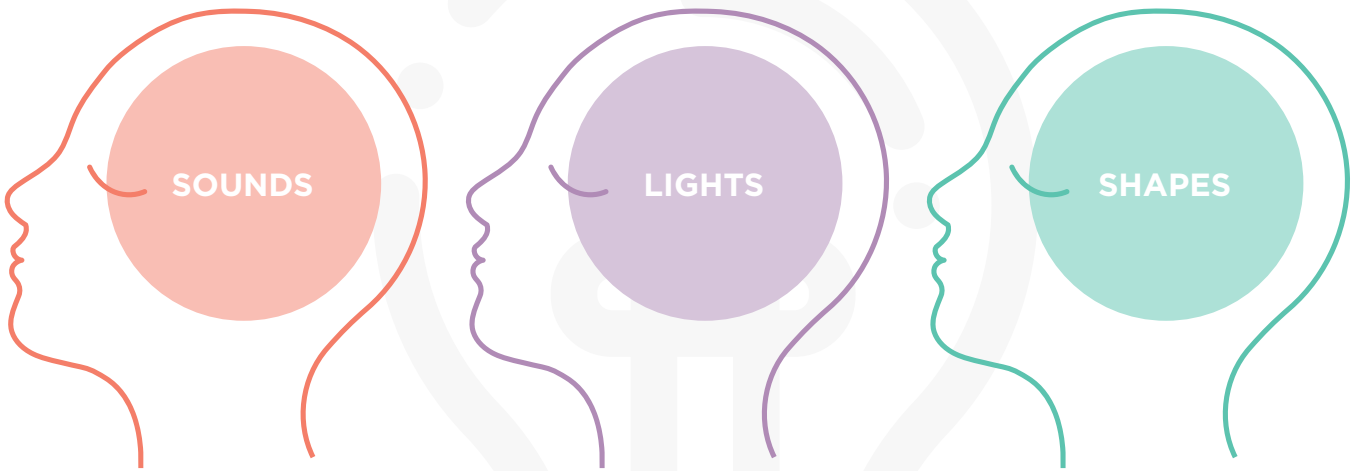
SEARCH FOR FOOD SNACKS
(hidden under bowls/cups)

POP UP TOYS THAT 'MAGICALLY' APPEAR
(e.g. 'jack in the box')

TREASURE HUNTS
(both hide and seek 'treasure' together)

Ideas

SOUNDS

LIGHTS

SHAPES

Squeaky toy under towel

Find the singing person

Hide phone and set alarm

Play spotlight

Torch under sheets

Shadow puppets

Squish object into container

Melt an ice cube

Mash up a potato or carrot

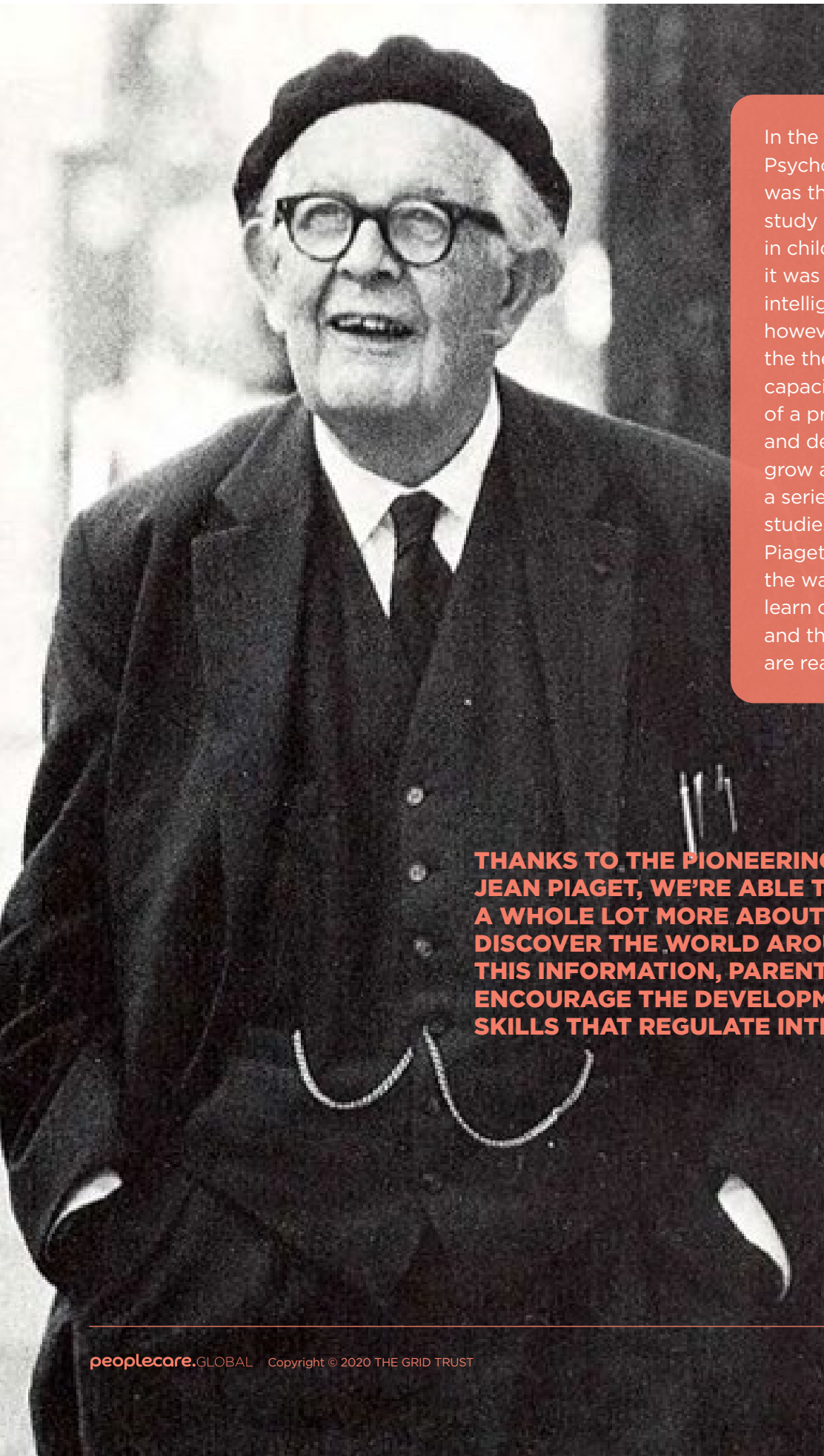**USING THE ABOVE IDEAS AS INSPIRTATION:**

Q. What object permanence game could you create and play with your child during

BATH TIME?

PLAY TIME?

DINNER TIME?

Who was Piaget?

In the 1930s, Swiss Psychologist Jean Piaget was the first to systematically study cognitive development in children. At the time, it was widely accepted that intelligence was a fixed trait; however, Piaget proposed the theory that cognitive capacity was more of a process which changes and develops as children grow and mature. Through a series of observational studies and ingenious tests, Piaget was able to observe the way in which children learn cognitive constructs, and the age at which they are ready to do so.

THANKS TO THE PIONEERING RESEARCH OF JEAN PIAGET, WE'RE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND A WHOLE LOT MORE ABOUT HOW TODDLERS DISCOVER THE WORLD AROUND THEM. WITH THIS INFORMATION, PARENTS CAN ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF COGNITIVE SKILLS THAT REGULATE INTELLIGENCE.

Separation Anxiety

Most toddlers experience a certain level of anxiety when separated from their primary caregiver. Separation anxiety is a normal part of development which occurs from around 8 months of age but reaches its peak at around 14-18 months. Even children with the most secure of attachments will have moments where they long for the security of mum or dad. However, with the development of object permanence, it's less scary for toddlers to say goodbye or be separated for short periods.

Consider the following ways to help you toddler develop separation confidence:

01
EXPLORE
Help your toddler learn independence by letting them wander into (crawl/walk) and explore other rooms on their own (if safe).

02
EXPLAIN
When leaving your child, reassure them and explain that you will return after a short period of time.

03
EXTEND
Gradually extend the amount of time that you are seperated on subsequent occasions.

04
EXCHANGE
Have a verbal exchange with your child from another room – reassuring them that you're still there (even though they can't see you)

05
EXPAND
Gradually expand your child's 'social trust' by safely leaving them in the care of friends/family.

06
EXPOSE
Gradual exposure is one of the fastest ways to help your child build confidence. While it may be tempting to avoid situations where separation anxiety may be triggered, in the long run, avoidance only serves to reinforce anxiety.

BASED ON THE ABOVE RECOMMENDATIONS:

Q. Are there any aspects you may need to either modify or engage in order to help build your child's confidence?

Language Development

Hearing your child utter their first words and start babbling is one of the sweetest sounds a parent can hear. Watching your child then begin to understand your words and mimic them for themselves is an amazing process. As your toddler ultimately transitions from sounds to words, phrases and sentences, other areas of cognitive development are also awakened. Cultivating language skills is one of the most powerful ways to both fast-track and enhance brain development.

Match the following ways to encourage language development in your toddler:

Respond to your child's non-verbal communication (e.g. rubbing eyes = "are you tired?"; Holding out cup = "would you like a drink?"

Name objects and describe their use (e.g. "this is a spoon - we use our spoon to eat our food"; "That's a bird - Birds fly in the sky").

Reverse roles: Have your toddler teach you things (e.g. describe to you what they are doing or what they've made/drawn).

Speak to your child (even if they can't yet talk back). The more they hear your dialogue, the faster they'll expand their vocabulary.

Spend time reading with your child and have your toddler point out (and sound out) specific items found in picture books.

In addition to playing with peers, encourage your toddler to take part in play with older children (i.e. siblings, family friends).

TALK

TUNE IN

TEACH

TIME

TAKE PART

TELL

Sensory Play

From birth to early childhood, children are constantly using their five senses to explore and make sense of the world around them. Providing opportunities to actively use their senses as they explore is crucial for brain development. This is referred to as "sensory play". Sensory play includes any activity that stimulates a child's sense of touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing, as well as engaging movement and balance. Not only is sensory play fun and engaging, but it also helps build nerve connections in the brain, encourages the development of fine and gross motor skills, supports language development, promotes imaginative play and encourages problem solving.

Sensory play doesn't require expensive toys. Simply use your imagination and incorporate:

INGREDIENTS FROM YOUR PANTRY -
BOXES FROM YOUR CLOSET -
STICKS, LEAVES AND FLOWERS FROM THE GARDEN -
CRAFT ITEMS FROM THE STATIONARY CUPBOARD -
PLASTIC CUPS AND PLATES FROM YOUR KITCHEN -
DRESS UP CLOTHES FROM THE BEDROOM -
MUSIC FROM YOUR FAVOURITE PLAYLIST -
FRESH PRODUCE FROM THE REFRIGERATOR -
POTS AND WOODEN SPOONS FROM THE KITCHEN -

When it comes to sensory play, the messier the better!

TIPS FOR SENSORY PLAY

- Colour cooked spaghetti "worms" with food colouring and place in a bowl for your child to play with

- Create a "beach" in a large container using sand and water

- Do some face painting with flour and water

- Make your own slime or play dough (see recipes online)

- Allow your child to play with shaving cream or whipped cream

- Create fun musical instruments (i.e. putting rice into a plastic bottle; plastic buckets and spoons)

- Create a "squishy bag" using hair gel, food colouring and a zip-lock plastic bag

- Bury some coins in a tray of sand and have your child have a treasure hunt

- Create a finger-paining masterpiece with ketchup and mustard

- Have a dance party, using dress up clothes to match the music.

- Play a smell and taste game (using sweet aromas and sour flavours)

- Make 'mud pies' from dirt in the garden - decorate with flowers