

SENSORY PLAY TO SAVE THE DAY



"I'M STUCK AT HOME WITH A TODDLER WHAT DO I DO?"

If you have a toddler and are experiencing any of the following, you are not alone.

- Temper tantrums
- Crankiness
- No naps
- Hitting, kicking, biting
- Busy and exhausted parents
- Endless requests for snacks



Toddlers have a lot of big feelings and long list of needs and wants. Many parents may think these behavior have to do with something they are doing wrong, when often times it is just the developmental stage of the child.

**IDEAS AND
ACTIVITIES
TO KEEP YOU
SANE AND
YOUR
TODDLER
ENGAGED**



SENSORY PLAY

The key to keeping toddlers content while helping them learn and grow is to provide as many experiences as possible, so that you can fill out that little brain of theirs. You see, the experiences your child has now, can help create the brain capacity that they have tomorrow. Sensory play is one way to provide a child with touch, taste, sound, smell, and feel while they learn about the world. As a teacher I had a large sensory table full of different materials each week. As a nanny, I had large plastic tubs I would fill with different materials to take out in the backyard for children to play with (and in). As a mom, I used smaller plastic bins with lids to have various sensory materials ready to go. Part of this was because it was good for their brains, part of it was to keep them occupied, and a big part of it was to give me a much-needed break.

"The experiences they have today create the brain capacity they have tomorrow"



TIPS AND TRICKS: SENSORY MATERIALS

What you need:

Garden soil, mulch, flour, play sand, soapy water, dry rice, dry beans, flour, coffee beans, or cornmeal (anything you have in bulk around the house)

- Make “cupcakes” with cupcake tins and a scooper
- Pour “bowls of soup” with bowls and a ladle
- Put little figurines, bugs, people, and cars in the material so the child can “build a world” for their objects
- Put the material in a large, plastic box so the child can get inside the box to feel the material on their bare feet and body
- Put sponges in the soapy water and let the child soak up and squeeze out the water (you can put food coloring in the water to make it even more fun)
- Bury objects in the material while the child closes their eyes and then have them hunt for the objects, pulling them each out while counting them



TIPS AND TRICKS: THE SQUISHY STUFF

What you need:

PLAY-DOH with:

- Cookie cutters
- Plastic forks
- Plastic knife
- Tooth picks

I find that once you show them how to make a few things they can then begin creating. I usually make simple things like pancakes, a hotdog, little balls of play-doh connected by toothpicks to make a spider

NON-TOXIC PAINT:

- Toddler in diaper only (take them outside for this one)
- Paint brushes
- Bowls to put paint in
- Soapy water
- Towel

Let them paint away, they can paint their bodies, your arms and legs, large pieces of cardboard, or the fence

SHAVING CREAM:

Let them draw into the shaving cream- shapes, letters
bit of body text





TIPS AND TRICKS: THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Dig a small, shallow hole in your backyard and fill it with water. Give your child some floating bathtub toys, a shovel, a cup, leaves, and sticks and watch them create their own pond for play.

On warm days, get out the sprinkler and let your child play in just swim trunks or a bathing suit. Sit back and watch them run through the water and scream with delight. I recommend this activity barefoot if your child and your grass allow.

A nature walk through the neighborhood- bring a bag as they collect leaves, sticks, and flowers to take home

Use a shoe box, blocks, or sticks to create a "bug house" in the backyard. Collect doodle bugs, June bugs, snails or any other bug they can find to live in the bug house. Collect and decorate with all the things a bug might need to liven up their home- grass, dirt, leaves, goldfish crackers, etc.



TIPS AND TRICKS: MUSIC TO MY EARS

Play music in the house that makes you happy (I personally recommend soul music like James Brown) and have a DANCE PARTY! There is nothing better than having a tiny, little booty dancing around the living room.

Sing songs and create movements for each part of the song to dance along with your child. Perform the dance for someone else.

Turn the music on and do a fashion show. Let your child dress up like their favorite character and announce very loudly "NOW INTRODUCING" as they walk out and strut their stuff in their (cool, adventurous, pretty, silly, brave) costume.

Music in the bathtub gives you a bit of a break. Play your child's favorite songs while they scrub-a-dub-dub.

If you play an instrument, get that bad boy out of the closet and play a song for your child. They won't care if it's terrible, they will just be proud to watch you play. If you don't play an instrument, find something in the house (like an empty oatmeal carton) that you can turn into a drum. Now play some Bob Marley and drum along with your child.



TIPS AND TRICKS: ART

First off, let go of any ideas of what you/they are making- think expressionism, not realism. Throw out the worksheets and instructions and get to creating.

What you need:

- Paint poured out on plastic or paper plates
- Trucks and cars with textured wheels (to roll through the paint)
- Cardboard
- Sponges
- An old toothbrush
- Stickers of any kind
- Stamps
- Paper cut into various geometric shapes
- Glue sticks

*If big messes make you panic, I recommend doing art with your child in a highchair or outside

**"Try to go
of any
ideas of
how you
think it is
supposed
to look."**



TIPS AND TRICKS: INDOORS

Use sheets, chairs, couches, and clip clips to create a living room fort. Fill it with pillows, blankets, stuffed animals, and/or books.

If you have an outdoor tent, why not set it up in your living room? You can put Christmas lights on it and turn out the lights to make a dreamy, little place to hang out.

Make a "fan fort" by using a sheet that is secured on both sides and put a fan blowing into the fort. You can find examples of this online. These are pretty funny and sure to bring about some smiles in your home.

Hide some stuffed animals around the house, turn the light down low, and let your little one use a flashlight to go on a bear hunt to find them.

If you have wood or tile floors, you can let your child sit on a towel or sheet while you (very carefully and slowly) pull them around the house shouting "choo-choo-comin' through!" I usually put a pillow over the sheet and under and behind the child just in case they want to lay back and enjoy the ride.

