

MEDIA GAMES

Printed and electronic media and computer games are nowadays an important part of children's play culture. Media includes children's songs and children's films, which often reach the smallest members of the family and can sensitise them to see beauty and inspire them to arts. Media education allows children to learn safe and age-appropriate use of media.

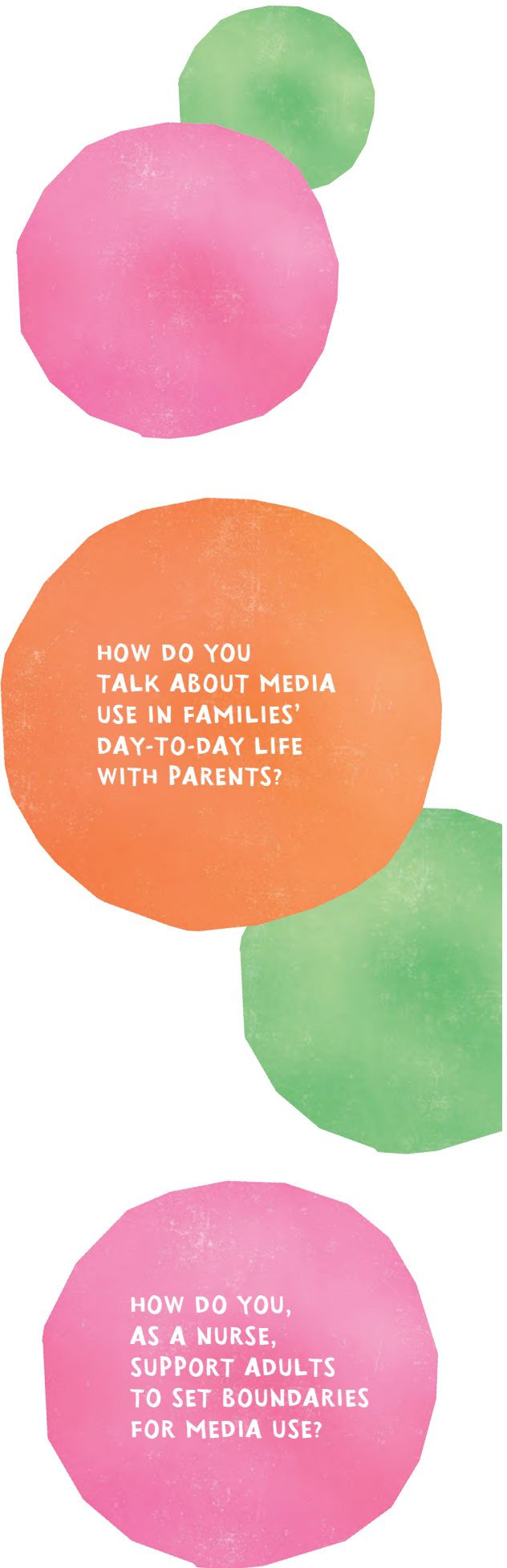
How to discuss media usage with pre-school-aged children? How do tablet and computer games feature in the discussions and games of pre-school-aged children? How to utilise camera or film as part of education work?

Rules

It is important for adults to acknowledge that their actions and example impact children's media habits. Adults have the responsibility for the media children consume. Many children start playing computer games and using smart phones at a very early age. Thus, it is good to remember that playing computer games and using smart phones are addictive for adults and children and reduce face-to-face interaction. Thus, it is important that the topic is discussed at the child health clinics with adults and, for example, in parent evenings.

The basis for media games is media education that takes into account children's needs. The important thing is doing things together, not the result. Different media devices, such as cameras, phones and computers, should be used together with children. It is crucial to come up with consistent and fair rules for media usage. Largely the same laws and rules exist in the virtual world as the real world. Adults should teach children to recognise where the boundary between public and private lies and what is right and wrong.

Social media affects the emotions, mood and thinking of its users – and thus also their actions. Exploring the world of different media is challenging, among other things, because the effects of media are often unintentional and unconscious. Children often adopt role models and values seen in adverts and music videos and consider them worth pursuing in real life.



” When children get an opportunity to share their visual creations to the rest of the group and when they discuss them together and think about the meanings conveyed by the photos, they experience a sense of community and being part of a group. -- It is important that a group of children can look at photos taken by them and their other visual creations over and over again and remind them of their own and the group’s shared experiences and memories and the positive emotions they trigger.” (Kumpulainen, Mikkola, Rajala, Hilppö & Lipponen 2014)



In the company of adults

When adults use media with children, they show that they are interested in the children’s world, thus giving them the courage to mention any puzzling things they may encounter in the virtual world.

Media is often also useful. It can help strengthen the sense of community between adults and children. Smart phones, for example, can be used to take photos and make videos and audio recordings together. A small child’s camera can record meaningful snippets of a child’s viewpoint and world.

Material created by children is an excellent route to their world of experience. Pictures can increase adults’ understanding of and empathy towards childhood. When adults examine photos taken by children, they are given a chance to understand children better and to feel deepening empathy towards their world. When the events in the children’s photos are discussed with them, children gain new ideas for their activities and learn to process their experiences. Child health clinics and ECEC present many opportunities for using media with parents and children. When media is appropriately used, it can be beneficial to supporting mental health skills, such as friendship and emotional skills.

Safe media usage supporting children’s mental health

HELP CHILDREN TO

- learn safe media usage together with an adult
- recognise the boundary between private and public.

Cooperation with parents

Discuss with parents how media is used at home and support them with setting up boundaries. Offer parents information on media education available at the Finnish Association on Media Education and Mannerheim League for Child Welfare websites.

Age limits protect children

- Age limits are there to protect children of the potential adverse effects of programmes and games.
- Children’s ability to understand and interpret media is dependent on their emotional and cognitive abilities, which develop with age.
- Age limits are recommendations and adults must evaluate the content of media and its suitability to individual children.

JOYS OF EXERCISING

Is there anyone more delighted in physical activity than a small child, who has recently learnt to walk or stand up? When children first get up on their feet, they may practice this new skill tirelessly, even through the night holding on to the side of their cot bed.

Through physical activity, children learn to perceive their body and their relationship with the surrounding world. As they move, they experience how it feels for your heart to leap with joy as you catch others in a game of tig. Physical activity incorporated in playing, games and daily life is genuine incidental exercise, and small bumps seldom slow children down.

Walking in the woods, playing on playgrounds and cavorting with friends develop children's sensory perception, thinking and memory and provide children with the joy of success. Physical abilities promote the development of children's self-image and self-esteem. Children do not need to be encouraged to walk, jump and climb. Often all that is needed is for adults not to limit children's opportunities and chances to be active.

Slow down and step into the world of children

Adults should let go of their haste when children meander on their way to the shops. Moving on children's terms is an excellent way for adults to practise being mindfully present and engaged. Encouragement and patience are virtues for adults.

Although pushing a child in a pushchair is handy, excessive sitting is harmful to children. Children's natural desire and need for physical activity is easily stifled, when they spend too much time in front of the TV or playing with smart phones. Adults should keep an eye on children's screen time, and find new inspiring activities for children who are not physically active. Exercise is one of the key ways to increase the mental health of people. It reduces the feeling of anxiety and the symptoms of depression and increases the release of endorphins.

Although all children have an inner need for physical activity, some children may get more pleasure out of basic daily exercise than others. Thus, it is important to ensure that all children learn basic physical skills, such as climbing, walking, running and jumping on stairs. When children balance on



Encouraging experiences of physical play and games might instil a more positive attitude towards exercise as the child moves into adolescence and early adulthood.

(Sääkslahti 2005)



Active parent evenings and physical play events can positively impact the physical activeness of three- to seven-year-olds.

(Sääkslahti 2005)

rocks and hang off ladders, they also develop their skills of thinking.

Daily exercise is not only healthy, it is also essential for children's normal physical growth and overall development. Exercise helps control stress, improves sleep and facilitates falling asleep. An active lifestyle may also offer a social network for life. Physical play with family and friends and shared games provide a foundation for mental health. In the right doses, exercise offers experiences and brings joy and pleasure.

From bans to encouragement

- What if there was a special space for bouncing?
- What if you could do hopscotch whilst waiting for your turn in the toilet?
- What if we turned the corridor into a space where you could glide on tummy boards made out of skateboards?
- What if you were allowed to jump off swings?
- What if you were allowed to walk up a slide as well as slide down?
- What if we had a climbing wall?
- What if you could walk on the floor stepping on different kinds of foot prints?
- What if a shared evening for children and parents included a geocache course around the day care centre and a playful competition for finding them?

MUSIC AND THE WELLBEING OF A CHILD'S MIND

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Music to support interaction and increase sense of community

Music works on an emotional level, bypassing verbal communication. Even newborn babies have a stronger sensitivity to singing and humming than speech. Research results shows that the roots of music are in our brain. Music has been part of human communities for tens of thousands of years. It strengthens the sense of community among small children and supports their language acquisition (Huotilainen, 2010). Singing to children also increases their experience of safety and trust. Thus, music offers versatile possibilities for strengthening the interaction within a group of children and for relieving the tension a small child may experience in a new situation such as on a health clinic appointment.

The singing voice of the adult does not play any role on how well the singing strengthens interaction (Marjanen, 2009). The voice of a parent is the best sound in the world for a child. This same thought can be applied to an adult who is instructing a group of children. When you sing or recite rhymes to or with children, they experience intimacy and presence, and above-all they form a connection. That connection is one of the most important things for the construction of a strong and stable foundation for a child's life.

Music belongs to everyone

As we sing, read rhymes and play instruments with children, we boost engagement in a group and strengthen the connection between the group members and promote their sense of community. When an adult chooses pedagogically suitable music for a group, everyone gets to experience successes. The joy that music brings creates a shared interactive experience. This also provides a positive boost to the emotional and social skills of the group of children.

Adults do not need to be music specialists to sing, recite rhymes and play instruments with a group. Even if they do not consider music to be a strong point for them, adults can still fully enjoy making music. We do not need to be experts in music to enjoy joint music sessions wholeheartedly and to strengthen the sense of community and interaction.



HOW CAN YOU INTRODUCE MUSIC TO DAY CARE CENTER ACTIVITIES?





I can, I know and I understand

Simple songs and rhymes bring big joy to children's life. Adults too will find it easier to remember the words to short songs. When songs have fewer words and more repetition, everyone manages to enjoy the music and the feeling of participation. Short songs allow you to come up with new words or actions to suit your group or invent body and rhythm instrument adaptations, which also develop creativity. When you plan to add instruments to a song, these three words are a big practical help: clarity, clarity and clarity. A simple song or rhyme sprinkles magic dust on a tidy-up time or getting dressed session. A simple song or rhyme may take just a few seconds but it increases intimacy and interaction manifold. Choosing a very simple song, rhyme or a set of actions to a pedagogic programme does in no way undermine the children. It offers them a chance to experience the joy of learning, doing things together, being encouraged by adults and above all succeed: I understand what this is all about! I am capable, and I learn! This feels nice! Successes inspire us to try new things and learn more.

Joys of playing an instrument

Playing rhythm instruments together in a group improves social skills. Children practice handling an instrument, waiting for their turn and returning the instrument to its intended place. Safe boundaries and an encouraging environment provide opportunities for learning new things.

Children learn to channel their energy through music, and inspiring musical exercises teach them listening skills. Everyone can find and learn new things about themselves and others through music. When a simple rhythm instrument activity is used to learn, for example, the two opposites of sound and silence, children find it easier to concentrate on the task. Children and adults alike enjoy the whirlwind of a shared activity and theme. That provides safety and joy to children.

Values

Music provides a means to teach values as well. The lyrics of a song may tell a positive tale of being inclusive: "When we're ready to begin; everyone can join in." When the melody, lyrics and body instruments form a musical whole, the strong, pedagogic, and pleasurable concept takes root in the minds of children. When children sing a song whose lyrics support the important elements in life, the message of the song starts to have an impact. There is strength in a song.

Swinging and bouncing together

Swinging to the beat of music in a strong piece of material with the adults holding onto it and the other children in the group participating and supporting their friend provides an experience of safety and engagement to a child. The child in the swing gets to experience intimacy and connection with others, whilst safely swinging to a song that tells about him/her.

Bouncing on an adult's lap provides an experience of closeness for children. The touch and intimacy provide a positive atmosphere between a child and an adult. Children thrive when they notice that adults enjoy their company. The joy is infectious! And the social relations centre in the brain becomes activated. The sense of shared community creates positive energy. A calm rhyme, humming or a song, on the other hand, can create a peaceful and safe atmosphere before bedtime or when a child needs comforting. Small, jointly executed musical encounters build a strong and supporting foundation for each child's unique life.



ART PROMOTES MENTAL HEALTH

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Art in its many forms gives children and adults alike an opportunity to study and examine the versatility of life and its phenomenon from different perspectives. Art can tickle all our senses, expand our dreams and stir memories. It can also be a vessel for self-reflection and pondering who we are. Art provides a frame for playing, emotions, friendships, rest and tranquillity, adult protection and helps us thrive. It challenges adults to marvel together with children. In addition to providing experiences, art also supports the well-being of children's mind. It gives an opportunity for expressing our emotions and experiences. With the support and encouragement of adults, art can become a coping strategy and a resource for children.

As you are studying works of art, you may see and look for colours, forms, lines, tastes, smells and movements. But any piece of art can also stir a sensation that you cannot find words to describe. Just pausing to look at art can be an unforgettable experience. Standing still, having a moment to yourself or sharing it with someone and concentrating can generate a positive feeling. The colours of the artwork may feel empowering or its rhythm calming. A picture may spark a conversation or an action, and it may bring new perspectives to things or teach something new. Art allows your thoughts to expand and discussions to take a new course. When you are looking at art with a group of children, you can never tell in advance what kinds of emotions the art or pictures will stir. However, when you share an art experience with someone else, there is no need to be afraid or weary of it or how it influences you.

There is no right way to look at, experience or see art and art images. Everyone has their own experience and vision of it. Art may also stir numerous, even surprising emotions, and those emotions may lead to actions and choices. Often art inspires and gives pleasure, but sometimes art can also appal or terrify.

Looking at and experiencing art is fascinating, because a piece of art that initially had triggered disgust and loathing may with time become a significant and important piece for you. However, sometimes art stirs no feelings at all. Art itself, experiencing art and the insights it awakens should however be given a chance. Children often approach different forms of art with ease and curiosity. Maybe children's ability to be playful, and to show open sincerity and their capacity to play offer an explanation.

Where and how can you experience art? Art and things to experience are



Sculpture

A sculpture is a three-dimensional picture. Sculptures can be made out of a variety of materials, such as stone, wood, metal, glass, recycled materials, sound, electricity, paper or fabric. A sculpture can be moulded, cast, welded or carved, among other things.

Painting

The oldest paintings are cave paintings. Pictures painted onto a canvas or a wood panel were invented during the medieval times. You need a base (such as canvas, paper, wall, wood panel) and colour i.e. pigment (such as oil, acrylic or water colours, or tempera) to paint. Paintings are most commonly made using different paint brushes or palette knives, but you can also use many other methods, such as finger painting or stippling with foam. Watercolours, frescos and graffitis are all considered to be paintings.

Drawing

A drawing can be made using coal, pencils, coloured pencils, chalk or felttip pens onto different materials.

everywhere! Art can be seen and experienced closer than you may think: many public buildings display art; graveyards often have sculptures; we use designers' products in our daily life, and museums and galleries can be found in almost every town.

It may not always be possible to go and see the genuine articles; that's when books, picture cards and the Internet offer great ways to access art. We can examine the treasures of a virtual museum; listen to a symphony orchestra concert on YouTube, or organise a weekly changing art exhibition with a group of children using art cards or by creating the artworks. However, seeing genuine works of art is also an important experience. If that is not possible, it might be a good idea to demonstrate the children the real size of the work of art they are looking at and, for example, describe the surface of the artwork or the feel of some of the materials. The artwork as a whole provides a new experience when it is within reach.

When experiencing and creating art with children, it is a good idea to remember that children are motivated by looking at and exploring things that have a connection to their own life and experiences. Pausing to look at a picture together is exciting and novel. With art, it is important to remember to respect each individual and allow them the right to participate based on their ability and wishes. Sometimes the moment might be wrong, or the thoughts and emotions stirred by the artwork such that you do not wish to share them. Respecting and listening to others is important, and adults should supervise that.

Art and culture are known to have a positive and broad impact on mental wellbeing. Art gives strength; it makes you laugh and cry; it gives space to new and forgotten emotions; it strengthens our self-esteem and allows us to feel empathy. Art can also teach and tell us stories about the past and present day. With art, we can experience and feel beauty and enjoy mind-blowing aesthetic experiences. There is strength in art. Every child has the right to enjoy art and culture and the wellbeing and growth resources art provides.

Graphics

Graphic art is made using different printing techniques. An artist who makes graphics first prepares a plate out of, for example, metal or wood. The artist starts by engraving or etching a picture on to the plate. After that, the artist spreads paint on to the plate, and then the image on the plate is printed onto paper or some other material. The printing is normally done with a press. The result is called a print. One plate can be used to make many prints. The prints are numbered, and the artist signs each of them.

Collage

Collage is a technique which combines a variety of materials and methods to make images and surface in one artwork. A collage can be two- or three-dimensional. You can use almost any material for a collage, such as toys, fabrics, wood, paper or photographs.

Environmental art

Environmental art is normally made using materials found in nature. An environmental piece of art can be just a short-lived work. An environmental piece of art can be just a short-lived work viewed on a video, for example, but it can also be an act, an event, a process or a work that shapes the environment and becomes part of the surroundings and changes with time.

Community art

Community arts are normally implemented as projects, events or workshops. The artist acts as the producer or director of the event, work of art or phenomenon. Often community artworks are implemented in cooperation with a certain community. The aim of the artwork may be to improve communality and wellbeing. The event is often documented and presented as a work of art.

Photography

The majority of photographs are taken with a camera. A photograph is an image exposed without a camera on a light-sensitive material. Photographs are usually printed on paper. Photography has diversified and changed a lot with digitalisation. Thus, a photograph can be a picture printed on light-sensitive material, or it can be an impression transferred on different materials using printer ink. A photograph can also be a digital printout, a photocopy or, for example, an image projected onto a wall.

Performances, events and acts

Performances, events and acts are art shows carried out in front of an audience. These performances can be either pre-announced or surprises to the audience. The performances can follow a plan or be improvised as they happen.

Media and video art

Media and video art includes video installations, films, animations and online art. A video installation may not have actors, a plot or a story.



Artists on the artist page

EERO JÄRNEFELT (1863-1937)

Eero Järnefelt was a Finnish artist and professor in the late 19th century. The majority of his works are oil paintings; although, he also produced graphic art. Eero has been described as a sensitive lyricist, who painted small details of nature but also imposing landscapes. He painted a number of cloud-themed paintings, and clouds enchanted him throughout his life. He was a particularly talented portrait artist.

VENNY SOLDAN-BROFELDT (1863-1945)

Venny Soldan-Brofeldt was a Finnish late 19th, early 20th century visual artist and painter. Venny has been described as a lively, quick-witted and intelligent person. The themes for her art were warm-hearted and often described things related to the home and family. She painted many child-themed artworks and sea and seaside landscapes.