

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Summer 2026

August 2026



Summer is a season of warmth, sunshine, and time together. It's the perfect opportunity to slow down, explore, and enjoy meaningful moments with your child.

Here are a few simple ways to make the most of summer:

- Nature walks: notice flowers, butterflies, and sounds of the outdoors.
- Water play: splash, pour, and explore with sprinklers or water tables.
- Outdoor storytime: enjoy books together in the shade or on a blanket.
- Sensory play: dig in sand, explore water, or play outside freely.
- Simple learning games: count, sort colors, and play "I Spy" outdoors.

These small, everyday moments help build connection, curiosity, and learning all summer long.



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REGION 6

MOUNTAINHEART COMMUNITY
SERVICES

248 RED OAK SHOPPING CENTER

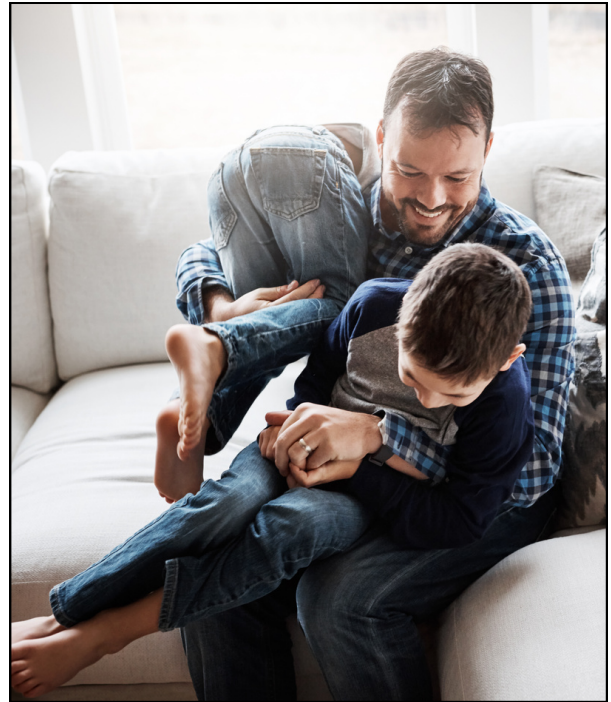
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Playful Parenting: The Benefits of Roughhousing with Your Children

Rough-and-tumble play is important in children's development. One of the most significant benefits is that it strengthens the bond between children and their parents, promoting a close connection essential for healthy development. The bold claim is that active, physical play, like roughhousing "makes kids smarter, emotionally intelligent, socially intelligent, ethical, physically fit, and joyful." (DeBenedet & Cohen, 2023) So whether you love barrel rolling with your children down a hill or feel uneasy about roughhousing, there is a growing body of evidence pointing to its importance in children's development.



What Roughhousing Really Is

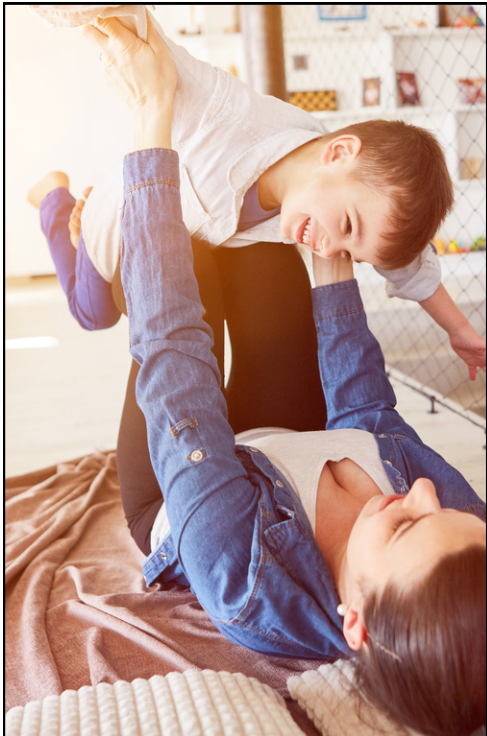
Real roughhousing is physically active play that's joyful but a little risky. The shrieks of laughter are part of the fun. Although there might be one parent who's more likely to engage in roughhousing, everyone should feel invited to join in, even (or especially) pairs of children and small groups of kids without adults.

The key is that all participants are willing. Usually, there is an arc of play in which kids start slow, get revved up and then calm down. Ideally, you should allow this cycle to run its course. Otherwise, kids will be out of sync and their mood and behavior can be affected. As early as the toddler years, children may start to try out this type of rowdy play. By around age 3 or 4, kid-led roughhousing is at its peak, but it continues all the way up to age 9 or 10 and can even benefit kids older than that.



The 6 Benefits of Roughhousing

Anthony DeBenedet, M.D., is a physician and dad who's on a mission to promote rough-and-tumble play and wrote a books on the topic. He and other doctors and research scientists have identified some of the unexpected ways that horseplay helps kids learn and grow by giving them:



- Bigger, better brains - Intense, physical play stimulates and helps develop areas of the brain that control emotional memory, language and logic helping them do better in school and have better relationships with friends.
- Self-control - Adults (usually without even thinking about it) hold back some of their strength and force them to keep things safer for everyone. Kids pick up on that to learn a valuable lesson about self-control and handling an imbalance of power. When kids have opportunities to roughhouse at home with loving adults, they are less likely to play too aggressively or take unsafe risks when they're away from parents' watchful eyes.
- Social skills - Rough-and-tumble play gives kids an opportunity to read each other's body language and facial expressions. Those are social cues all kids need to master to make and keep friends and succeed in group settings, like classrooms and teams.
- Safe aggression - Aggressiveness doesn't seem like a quality we want our kids to have, but they do need to learn persistence and how to take the right kinds of risks (think: sticking up for themselves if they're falsely accused of misbehavior or pushing themselves to try a challenging new sport). Kids can learn that physical contact does not have to be violent as well as gain confidence in their physical skills.
- Flexible thinking - Rough-and-tumble play is unpredictable, so it makes kids think on their feet (or while hanging upside-down or clinging to an adult's back). That translates into problem-solving skills like figuring out, together, what's fun and what's not helps kids learn how to negotiate and be leaders.
- Physical fitness - Kids tend to spend a lot of time engaged in sedentary activities, but their muscles need to move every day. Roughhousing challenges their muscles and gets kids up off the couch. Plus, it stimulates endorphins, the body's natural pain and stress fighters, as well as oxytocin, the hormone we get from physical contact, which makes us feel loved.

Roughhousing Guidelines

The concept of roughhousing may make you nervous. When we think of children's roughhousing, we think of fighting or someone getting hurt. But parent and child horseplay is an entirely different story as there is enormous value in parent-child play. It can "unleash" many of the same benefits associated with undirected and unmonitored peer play. Children are primed to play and it's a good bet most children will be eager to having a parent's full attention.

Adults should remember these detailed guidelines for successful roughhousing:

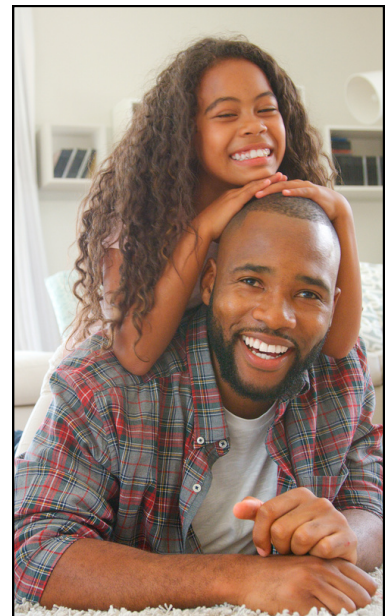
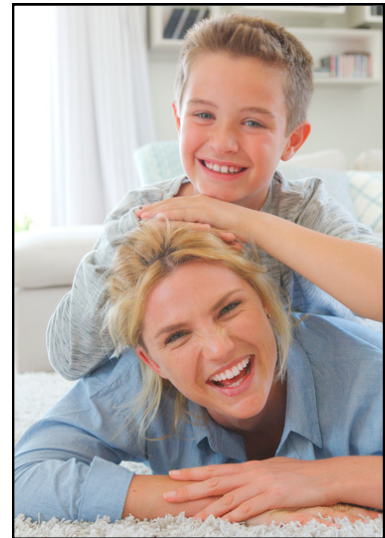
- Don't surprise your children by starting any horseplay activity if they are not ready.
- Roughhousing has a natural arc - start calm and escalate to high intensity, always allowing for wind down before stopping.
- Avoid overstimulating your child. You can slow down by speaking softly, moving at a slower pace, or taking breaks.
- Let your child win sometimes to build the confidence a child needs when not at home.

Regular physical play can reinforce a positive family dynamic, like dancing in the living room or enjoying any other pastime together. Taking a few minutes to roughhouse - to become an elephant or elf, a bulldozer or the bearer of a magic wand - with your child pays off in the sheer joy you both feel. And, as DeBenedet and Cohen point out, studies suggest that physical play with your kids "forestalls mental decline" in adults (2023).

No matter how exhausted you feel, a quick romp revives you and adds to the family memory bank. Maybe you become the "Kissing Monster." Chasing your kids around the house to give them a kiss - not only fun but also horseplay that they will talk about for years to come.

References:

- Andrews, C., (n.d.). Playful parenting: why roughhousing is vital for kids' growth. Retrieved from <https://theallianceforec.org/blog/2024/9/9/playful-parenting-why-roughhousing-is-vital-for-kids-growth>
- DeBenedet, A. T., & Cohen, L. J. (2023). Unplug and play: The ultimate illustrated guide to roughhousing with your kids. Quirk Books.
- Holecko, C. (n.d.) 6 reasons roughhousing is good for children. Retrieved from <https://parents.highlights.com/6-reasons-roughhousing-good-children>.
- Newman, S. (2023). Benefits of roughhousing with your children: what everyone misses when parents don't engage in physical play with their kids. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/singletons/202304/benefits-of-roughhousing-with-your-children>.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

Keep your little ones safe and healthy this summer:

- Dress for warm weather with lightweight clothing, hats, and sunscreen.
- Encourage plenty of water breaks and take breaks in the shade during outdoor play.
- Use child-safe insect repellent and check for ticks after spending time outdoors.
- Always supervise children closely around pools, lakes, sprinklers, and other water activities.
- Store lawn equipment, gardening tools, chemicals, and grilling supplies safely out of children's reach.

For more tips, visit the CDC website:
[Young Children: Safety in the Home & Community](#)



STATE PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

West Virginia Medicaid helps eligible children, pregnant women, and families access essential health care services. Medicaid provides comprehensive health coverage to support healthy growth and development from the very beginning.

Services Offered:

- Health Care Coverage: Doctor visits, well-child checkups, immunizations, hospital care, and prescriptions.
- Early & Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT): Preventive screenings and services to identify and address health concerns early.
- Behavioral Health Services: Access to mental and behavioral health care for children and families.
- Care Coordination: Connections to additional health and community resources when needed.

Families can learn more or apply for benefits by visiting www.wvpath.wv.gov or contacting their local Department of Human Services office.

UPCOMING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

WV Birth to Three is excited to continue offering new training opportunities for families on a variety of topics designed to support your child's growth and development. These sessions provide practical tips, helpful resources, and strategies you can use at home. To learn more about upcoming trainings, speak with your service coordinator or visit our website for the latest schedule and details.

[Click Here: WV Birth to Three Homepage](#)



AGENCY RESOURCES

MountainHeart Community Services and the WV Birth to Three Program has started offering Pop-Up Sensory Playgroups throughout Region Six, providing fun, hands-on opportunities for children and their caregivers to learn, play, and connect.

Each playgroup features sensory-rich activities that support early development while giving families simple ideas they can use at home. These events also provide opportunities to connect with community resources and other local families.

To find upcoming sensory playgroups and other family-friendly community events, follow our MountainHeart Community Services – WV Birth to Three Region 6 Facebook page or call our office.

We look forward to playing, learning, and growing with your family!

<https://www.facebook.com/mountainheartwv>

