

RISKY PLAY

INFORMATION AND INSPIRATION SHEET

INFORMATION ADAPTED FROM RUSTY KEELER'S "10 WAYS TO SUPPORT RISKY PLAY"

"Facilitating children's efforts to take reasonable risks, test their limits, and gain increasing competence and a sense of mastery through active play and social interactions."

HDLH Pg.33

HOW TO SUPPORT RISKY PLAY IN YOUR PROGRAM

1. Reflecting on Your Values

- What values and beliefs do you hold regarding risky play?
- Create a list of your values and beliefs to refer to frequently.



"Having clarity about your values can help you to resist using power and position to make decisions. Instead of relying on gut reactions, your response to experiences are guided by the kind of community you want to build and the values that drive your practice."

- Creating a Culture of Reflective Practice. Pg.21

Your values and childhood experiences play a big part in your comfort level with Risky Play



2. Remember Your Childhood

- Where did you play as a child? Were you overly supervised and protected? Or were you more free ranging? Did you take risks?
- Children today need opportunities for freedom and self-directed play just like children from generations past.
- Adults often hold the power to say yes or no. How are you saying yes?

3. Change of Clothes

- Remember **mess is a by-product of play.**
- Ask parents to bring in clothes that can get messy.
- Create a "lending library" for children to borrow clothes for messy play.



4. Why is Risk Important?

- Can be fun! Testing limits and challenging oneself can be thrilling.
- Helps children navigate their inner bodies, develop resiliency, and promote physical development.
- Helps children tap into their inner guidance to manage risk & keep themselves safe.
- Risky play takes concentration, creativity, problem-solving, and coordination.
- Helps build the prefrontal cortex of the brain (supporting self-regulation).
- Helps emotional regulation.
- Helps children deal with failure.
- Can promote teamwork, building social skills and decision making skills.



Risk vs. Hazard

5. Risk vs. Hazard

- **Risks are good and hazards are bad.**
- When supporting risky play it is important to make a distinction between a risk and hazard.

Risk

- An activity or element (See Ellen Sandseters' 6 Elements of Risky Play) that could be a little dangerous, the child can see the risk, and can choose, for themselves, if they want to take the risk.



Hazard

- Something dangerous that could hurt a child, that they or you do not see, and aren't able to make a choice about.

- **As an educator locate and remove hazards, so children are able to take risks, such as daily playground checks.**



6. You Know the Children Best!

- You know the children's strengths and their challenges and see them grow everyday.
- Some children are comfortable with taking risks and others are more cautious and look for a helping hand to come out of their comfort zone.



7. Risk-Benefit Analysis

- This is a formal process to examine various risky play experiences and to think about how they fit with your core values for play.
- This helps you consider the risks and benefits and how you can manage them.
- Reflect on the bad things that could happen but also the positive experiences that could happen (e.g. keeping a fallen log on the outdoor play space, or a small climbing structure inside).
- This can help everyone become more comfortable with saying YES to risks (families, management, other colleagues).

Risk	Benefit
Management	

8. Wait, Watch & Wonder

- When we step into soon we disrupt the thought process and once it is disrupted it wont go back to the depth that it was.
- How can you incorporate a thoughtful pause into your practice to give children time to navigate their way through play?
- Think about the power a pause can hold!
Wait – Breath and count to 5.
Watch – Notice what they are doing.
Wonder – What are they doing? Should I stand back or step in?



Consider the 6 Elements of Risky Play by Ellen Sandseter. How are these supported in your program?

1. Great Heights

Interacting with great heights helps kids face fears and build confidence.



2. Rapid Speed

Moving at rapid speeds helps children understand and use their bodies.



3. Dangerous Tools

Using dangerous tools helps children build confidence and skills.

4. Dangerous elements

Engaging with dangerous elements is a chance to face fears and understand the world.



5. Rough and Tumble

Rough and tumble play is a chance to hone physical and social skills.

6. Disappearing or Getting Lost

Disappearing or getting lost offers a temporary scary thrill.

<https://playrevolutionhq.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Ellen-Sandseters-6-Categories-Of-Risky-Play.pdf>



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Resource Bins:

#12697- Whittling and Carving

#11823- Real Tools

#12571- Japanese Tea Set

#12620, 12621, 12622- Pickler Triangle, Arch & Accessory

#1455- Toddler Climber

#12502- Easel Painting- Practical Life (Montessori)

#12565- Cooking- Practical Lift (Montessori)

THRC Resource Library
has a variety of resources to
support your Risky Play
Journey.



Books:

#11377- Outdoor and Nature Play in Early Childhood Education

#11522, 11523- Adventures in Risky Play

#633- Nature's Playground

#1300- Dirty Teaching: A Beginner's Guide to Learning Outdoors

#1818- Natural Playscapes

#11422- Exploring Water with Young Children

Article:

[Healthy childhood development through outdoor risky play: Navigating the balance with injury prevention](#) | Canadian Pediatric Society (cps.ca)

Rusty Keeler Podcast:

Stream [Episode 6: Exploring the Outdoors with Rusty Keeler](#) by THRC Table Talks

Outside Play Website:

This will take you through a guided journey of 3 different scenarios that can support in thinking about your approach to risky play. There are also other tools to help you decide on and develop a personalized plan to support in making changes in the program.

[Outsideplay.org](https://www.outsideplay.org)

