



Post Adoption Resource Center Newsletter Oakland & Macomb County

Brain Building Through Play

Play is essential for healthy child development. From infancy onward, simple, playful interactions help build strong brain foundations, support lifelong learning, and promote resilience.

As children grow, play helps them practice key skills such as focusing attention, remembering information, and developing self-control. These abilities—often called executive function skills—support success in school and in life.

Activities for younger children are designed for adults and caregivers to do together, while activities for older children encourage more independent play and positive interactions with peers.

Below are age-based ideas for building young brains through play. You'll find a link to more age ranges and activities can be found at the bottom of page two.

Children (4-7 years old)

Children's executive function, self-regulation, and physical skills develop rapidly during the years from four to seven. Every child develops at their own pace, so choose games that align with their individual skill levels. Games should be challenging, but not too frustrating.

Younger children in this age range may need help as they learn game rules. As kids get older, their independence grows as well. You can support this development by stepping back from leading their play. Your goal is for children to eventually manage their own games with their friends and peers, though your help may still be needed occasionally for sorting out disagreements.



I Spy

Saying, "I spy with my little eye..." give a clue about an object that everyone playing can see. For example, if you see a school bus, say, "I spy with my little eye ... something yellow." The child(ren) must look around and make guesses that match the clue (raincoat, flower, etc.), and the game continues until someone guesses correctly. Add more clues if needed ("it's yellow and has wheels"). (Tip: Borrow *I Spy* books from your local library to keep the fun going!)

**Orchards
Children's
Services**

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*For more information on the Post Adoption Resource Center please contact us at
313-530-9746*

*Or visit our website at
PARC-orchards.org*



Provided by Orchards Children's Services,
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Brain Building Through Play (continued)

Children (8-12 years old)

For kids between 8 and 12 years old, play can help strengthen executive function and self-regulation skills, practice their budding social skills, and promote their physical health. Different activities can help kids challenge their minds and bodies, learn to get along with others, and make new friends.

To hold their interest, suggest increasingly complex activities. Encourage kids to focus on having fun and learning new things, rather than on winning or losing. (Although it's also important to practice being a good sport whether you win or lose.) Note each child's unique interests and talents as they take shape!



Informal Physical Activities

If kids aren't into organized sports, there are many other ways to get exercise and have fun with peers. Frisbee, hide-and-seek, tag, and pick-up basketball are examples of games that kids can play almost anywhere. Jump rope games can be played on the sidewalk or the playground. Encourage kids to make up their own games, too!

Teens (13-17 years old)

Even teens need time to play. As with younger children, play helps support learning and development, particularly in building executive function and self-regulation skills—such as setting goals and planning ahead, being adaptable and flexible, and controlling impulsive behavior. These skills give youth a strong foundation for the adult years and help with managing increasing school-related responsibilities, like homework load and time commitments for sports and clubs.

The activity below is just one example of how teens can challenge their minds and bodies, but also unwind and have fun. It's much too easy for teens' lives to become over scheduled and stressful. Help them to have unstructured play time and down time for a healthy balance. (They may resist adults' suggestions at first, but often the ideas sink in and they act on them later!)




Try Something New

Teens can nurture their growing independence by exploring and taking risks safely. They could try a food they've never eaten or become a tourist in their own town and visit a site they've never been to before. Have teens invite their friends over to cook or bake something together. They'll probably make a mess, but they'll have fun and learn how to feed themselves when they're on their own later!



To see more brain-building play ideas for kids of all ages, visit:
<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/brainbuildingthroughplay>

Center on the Developing Child  HARVARD UNIVERSITY

**Information expanded from: Harvard University—Center on the Developing Child*

PARC in the Community

PARC continues to hold the Macomb and Southfield parent supports group on a monthly basis and recently added a new group in Wayne County!

In January, families joined PARC for a two-day parent training led by Dan Dubovsky. Parents gained a deeper understanding of various diagnoses and explored practical interventions they can use at home. While parents were engaged in learning, the children enjoyed playing new games and creating crafts together.



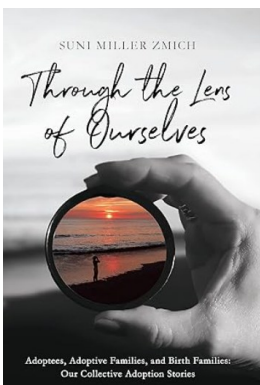
In February, PARC expanded its support network by launching a new support group location in Wayne County, allowing more families to connect and get support!

March was a busy month, featuring both a parent workshop and a parent training. During the workshop, parents learned about teen dating, including how to recognize the signs of unhealthy relationships and how to respond effectively. A follow-up session designed specifically for teens will take place in April.

The Roots and Wings parent training focused on supporting identity and maintaining connections with birth families. This training was made extra special by including a panel of adoptive parents and adult adoptees who have experienced fostering birth family connections. Panelists shared their insights and personal stories, creating a space for discussion and questions.

PARC has several things in the works for the upcoming months, be sure to keep an eye out. As always, if you have any ideas or suggestions, please feel free to reach out!

Suggested Read



Through the Lens of Ourselves: Adoptees, Adoptive Families, and Birth Families: Our Collective Adoption Stories

Author: Suni Miller Zmich

Adoption is an amalgam of grace, fear, joy, anger, and love, which pushes us to know WHY we exist.

Through the Lens of Ourselves captures 34 stories of the adoption triad: adoptee, adoptive parent, and birth parent. This collection portrays the life-long effects as biology and circumstance collide – the craving for identity, the yearning for normalcy, and the grieving over that which was lost. Fewer than 5% of Americans are adopted, yet nearly all Americans know someone touched by adoption. By illustrating the primal nature of human relationships, these poignant narratives draw in adoption community members as well as those who do not have a direct connection to adoption.

Valuable Resources

Alpha Family & Foster Closet

The Alpha Family & Foster Closet is a free resource to families that are struggling financially.

We provide:

- New & like new clothing
- Hygiene products
- Coats, snowpants, hats & gloves
- Shoes and boots
- Baby equipment (cribs, car seats, highchairs, strollers, diapers)
- Books, crafts, games & toys
- Backpacks, uniforms & school supplies

Located in Alpha Baptist Church:
28051 W. Chicago, Livonia.

For more information or to make an appointment to visit our Closet, please call 734-224-3882.

You can email:
Alphafamilyfostercloset@gmail.com
and check us out on Facebook.

Upcoming Meetings, Trainings & Events

ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

When: 2nd Tuesday of the month **Time:** 6:00 - 7:30 PM

Where: 24901 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 500, Southfield, MI 48075

Facilitator: Betsy Thomas



WAYNE COUNTY PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

When: 3rd Tuesday of the month **Time:** 6:00 - 7:30 PM

Where: Bethel Assembly of God 2984 Fort St., Lincoln Park, MI 48146



MACOMB COUNTY PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

When: Last Wednesday of the month **Time:** 6:00 - 7:30 PM

Where: New Life Presbyterian Church -11300 19 Mile Rd., Sterling Heights, MI 48314



TEEN WORKSHOP: DAY 2 (HYBRID)

When: Tuesday, April 7, 2026 **Time:** 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Topic: When Relationships Get Complicated: Recognizing Red Flags and Building Healthy Relationships

Facilitator: Kaleigh Cornelison

Where: Orchards Children's Services **OR** via Microsoft Teams

24901 Northwestern Hwy., Suite 500, Southfield, MI 48075 **OR**

Microsoft Teams ID: 284 510 690 029 90

Microsoft Teams Passcode: YE2qm9yS



Dinner will be provided.

There will be a place for parents to wait for their teens at the office and dinner will be provided

★ Please keep an eye out for updates via email and social media! Connect with PARC at:

Website: parc-orchards.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/OCSPostAdoptionResourceCenter

Email: parcocs@orchards.org