



MAKING THE FUTURE BRIGHTER ONE CHILD AT A TIME



IDEAS FOR SUMMER FUN: LET'S GO TO THE PLAYGROUND!



Summer is in full swing, and that means the little ones are out of school and getting restless for some fun in the sun. Why not plan a trip to a nearby playground or park to let the children unwind and get fresh air outdoors? Going to a playground is a great way to let your child socialize while working on important motor skills like balance and hand-eye coordination.

Below is a list of universal playgrounds all across [New Jersey](#), with various types of activities to keep kids busy while they learn (and work off some extra steam!).

- Central Park of Morris County: 91 Central Ave., Morris Plains
- Challenger Place–Monmouth County Park: Dorbrook Recreation Area, 209 Rt. 537 E, Colts Neck
- Edgemont Park All Children's Playground: 20 Edgemont Rd., Montclair
- Memorial Park: 713 Cumberland St., Westfield
- Morris-Union Jointure Playground: 340 Central Ave., New Providence
- Phil Rizzuto Park: 594 Morris & North Aves, Union
- Rainbow Land: Midland School, 94 Readington Rd., North Branch
- Tony's Place–Monmouth County Park: Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park, 221 Ocean Ave. N, Long Branch
- Van Saun Park: 216 Forest Ave., Paramus
- Votee Park: 1097-1235 Palisade Ave., Teaneck

These playgrounds offer varying levels of handicap accessibility, and guaranteed fun for all! For those outside of the Garden State, check out this list of [accessible playgrounds for everyone](#).



HELP CHILDREN STAY HEALTHY AFTER SCHOOL ENDS!



In New Jersey, tens of thousands of children get their meals through school programs. When school is out, getting that needed nutrition can be a challenge for some lower-income families.

To help feed children in New Jersey, there are federal meal programs like [Summer Meals](#) that provide healthy food options throughout the summer. There are also communities that offer free meals in public places children frequent, such as parks and libraries.

These programs are a great way for children to socialize with their peers and eat free, healthy meals and snacks. Unfortunately, many parents are unaware of these programs, and children are needlessly going hungry. Here's what you can do to help feed children this summer:

- Engage the community by distributing [fliers](#)
- Reach out to schools, using [these resources](#), and [other media](#) to get them involved
- Plan an event for the community
- Share information on social media

To learn more about helping children get their needed nutrition during the summer, [visit the NJ Department of Agriculture](#).



THE ROLE OF RESILIENCE IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT



Although parents have many different goals in mind for their children, resilience is essential for any child to succeed in life. Resilience is the ability to continue moving forward after hardships, and many believe that an overprotective parent can stop children from learning this necessary skill. Harvard University's [Center on the Developing Child](#) lists four factors that are needed for children to develop resilience:

- Supportive relationships with adults
- A sense of control
- The ability to adapt and self-regulate
- Sources of faith, hope, and cultural traditions

For recommended activities to help your child learn resilience, you can visit [Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child](#).



NEW "TALK WITH ME BABY" COURSE AVAILABLE ONLINE



[85% of brain growth](#) happens during the first three years of a child's life. Research shows that children who are more verbally engaged during those years have a larger vocabulary and are often [more successful later in life](#). To help ensure children are exposed to language early on, [Cox Campus](#) is offering a "Talk With Me Baby" course geared toward practitioners.

The program encourages practitioners to build on the relationships they have already developed with the families they serve and encourage family members to engage in meaningful conversations with their young children. These meaningful conversations can help children to advance both their reading skills and other learning.

If you are interested in helping children advance their language skills, check out the [course online](#).



THE IMPORTANCE OF SERVE AND RETURN INTERACTIONS



Serve and return interactions, or interactions in which appropriate behaviors are positively reinforced, are imperative for a child's healthy development. These interactions strengthen the development of a child's brain architecture and assist with communication and social skills. A lack of these responsive relationships can be detrimental to a child, causing not only a lack of appropriate social interaction, but an unnecessary flood of stress hormones as well.

Stable and responsive relationships play an integral role in the healthy development of a child's brain. There are many resources for adult caregivers to ensure they are engaging in appropriate serve and return interactions with the children in their care. For further guidance, view the [breakdown of Serve and Return Interactions Handouts](#), which splits the interactions into five easy steps developed by the Filming Interactions to Nurture Development (FIND) program.

You can read more about the FIND video coaching program and its history [here](#).



SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING



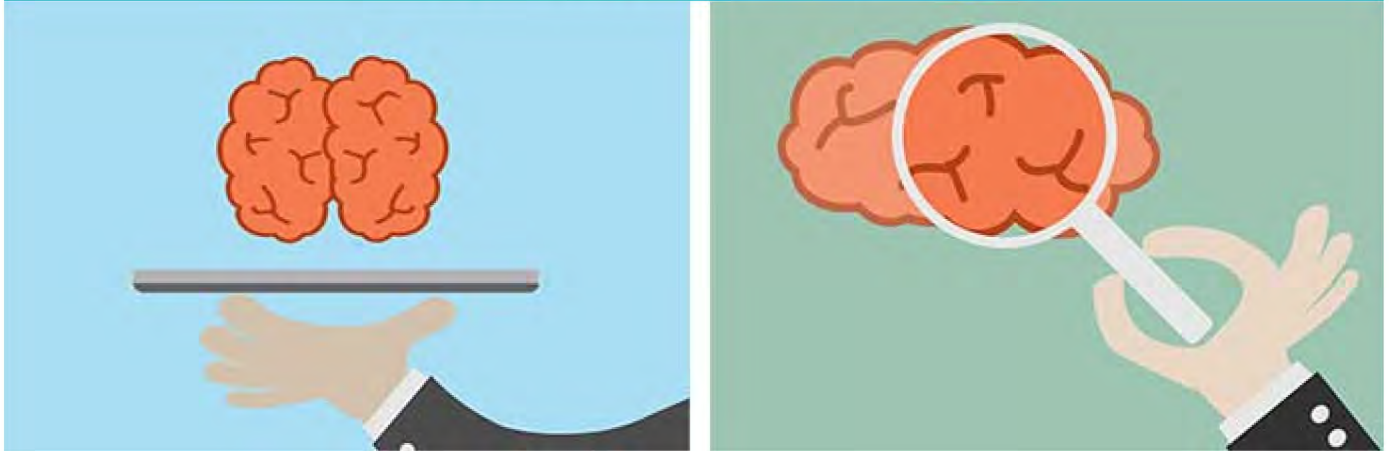
Parents and caregivers alike help children to understand the world, from education to appropriate socialization, through nurturing care. [Being sensitive to a child's social and emotional needs](#) provides them with a foundation for health and well-being as they grow.

Social-emotional development is important to a child's well-being as any other type of learning. In fact, this development can even help encourage children to learn in other areas, including education, social skills, and the managing of emotions. A child's social-emotional skills can be affected by a variety of factors, such as genetics, but early experiences play a crucial role in helping to effectively build these skills.

While it is normal for children to experience stress as they grow, it is important for parents and caregivers to have nurturing relationships with children to prevent unnecessary stress, which can negatively affect their learning and relationships. To learn more about the evidence backing social-emotional development in children, check out the new [Too Small to Fail](#) report.



HOW POVERTY AFFECTS THE BRAIN



Does the experience of financial difficulty affect the way we think? Studies have shown that children from lower-income families do not perform as well in school. Previously, it was assumed that low performance of children from lower-income families is caused by genetics or societal expectations, but new studies show that there are more factors involved.

While there is a strong correlation between being impoverished and having poorer brain function, there isn't hard evidence that proves that the lack of money is the cause. Rather, factors that typically correspond with poverty, such as scarce food supplies or stress, seem to cause the negative effects on the brain. Science suggests that poverty and the effects of being poor can cause developmental damage, especially in young children.

For more information about the impact of poverty on the mental development of children, listen to the BBC's The Inquiry: [Does Poverty Change The Way We Think?](#)



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