

# THE POWER OF PLAY



*“Think of the possibilities.  
What if parents, irrespective  
of socio-economic boundaries,  
could be shown an easy way to turn  
everyday moments into joyful, learning  
experiences? Could this solve the problem  
of access to early learning opportunities?  
Could it help a generation grow up  
smarter, stronger and kinder?”  
- Sonali Khan, Managing Director,  
Sesame Workshop India*

## PLAY CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

Play is the natural language of childhood. Through play children imagine, express, explore, and understand the world around them.

From birth to age six, when the brain grows rapidly, play offers rich experiences that accelerate the physical, cognitive and socio-emotional growth of a child.

Caregivers, however, do not always see the value of play or its link with learning.

In 2016, Sesame Workshop and the LEGO Foundation partnered to address this need by using play to put transformative, hands-on learning experiences within the reach of caregivers and children in India, Mexico, and South Africa.

This book shares the highlights of Play Every Day from around the world. Join the fun!





# TEST YOUR PLAY-READINESS

How many play opportunities can you spot in this picture?



## HINTS

- 1 Can these clothes be sorted by color?
- 2 Is there a counting game hidden here? How many clothes and how many clothes pegs do you see?
- 3 Let's play Detective. Can you help Teddy Bear find his blue shorts?
- 4 Which of these starts with the letter 'S'?
- 5 Solve the mystery: which clothes belong to whom?
- 6 Why did Teddy Bear go into the laundry? How did he get dirty?



# PLAY IS A BUILDING BLOCK FOR LEARNING

Both caregivers and children made new discoveries during the Play Every Day program. Caregivers were exposed to simple but stimulating play activities and, materials and videos that demonstrated the benefits of play. Facilitators showed caregivers how they could gently guide children to lead them to new ideas and understanding through play. As the children responded with words, stories, numbers and role play, caregivers saw how easily children could learn and build knowledge through play.



*"Now, when we're playing and my child tells me something, I ask her questions. Sometimes her answers are very funny, but I find that she is beginning to think about things in a new way."*

**14%**

Increase in the understanding of the importance of play in children's development in India.

This little girl in Delhi learns more about what doctors do as she plays with a toy stethoscope. Her mother plays along by pretending to be a patient.





A boy in Mexico learns to identify objects by using different senses and applying past knowledge as his father guides him through the activity.



5%

Increase in caregiver understanding of pretend play as a foundation for academic learning in Mexico.

*"I see how playing not only involves physical activities like playing ball or running, just for the fun of it. Playing means that no matter what activity we do together, my child learns and I get to learn from him, too."*

*"My relationship with my son wasn't very strong because I spend a lot of time at work. But after Play Every Day, whenever I find time, I know where to start. Before, it was not easy to bond with him, but now I know how to."*

11%

Increase in caregiver understanding of pretend play as a foundation for academic learning in South Africa.



This mother in Zandspruit, South Africa, helps her child learn about the world around him. She helps him identify everyday objects from a textless book made out of old magazines.



## THE TREE THAT GROWS LANGUAGE

Children and caregivers learnt to stretch their imagination together, stringing pictures and hanging them onto a story tree. Vocabulary and language skills grew along with the stories.

### TRY IT YOURSELF!

Make a paper tree. Hang pictures on its branches and connect them with a story. The story can change every time you move a picture!



## PLAY IS HAPPINESS AT WORK

Through Play Every Day, caregivers gained confidence in their ability to play. They were able to shed inhibitions and be silly for a while. Many danced, jumped and sang for the first time in years. Their children were delighted to find adults speaking their language and came back asking for more.





A young mother in Delhi, India, encourages her child to learn by posing playful questions and comments.



8%

Increase in caregiver confidence as play mentor to their children in India.

*"These workshops have brought back memories of my childhood. I was always told to be quiet. But, in asking my child questions today, I am learning new things about her and myself."*

*"At first, I felt that it was an obligation to attend the Play Workshops, something I had to do because the school was inviting me. Then, I realized how easily I could make my daughter happy. I enjoyed my daughter as I had never done before."*

11%

Increase in caregiver confidence as play mentor to their children in Mexico.



A father in Mexico shares childhood memories of fishing with his father as he plays "Let's go fishing" with his daughter.





..... This mother in Diepsloot, Johannesburg, South Africa is engaging her child in storytelling using a textless storybook that requires both her and the child to use their imagination as they take turns to recite their favourite stories. ....

**18%**

Increase in caregiver confidence as play mentor to their children in South Africa.

*“I notice that I am more patient, my stress levels have decreased because I spend most of my time laughing with him as we play.”*

## LET’S TELL A STORY

Textless storybooks were provided to participants to spark their imagination. Children in Mexico, alongside their caregivers, shared stories that they came up with as they turned the illustrated pages. Children had fun telling different stories using the same storybook. This allowed caregivers to realize that a fun story time moment can happen with any illustration or scenario they encounter.

### ..... TRY IT YOURSELF!

Use any illustration or storybook you find. Ask your child to tell a story about the illustrations he sees. Take turns telling different stories and, as a family, take turns building the story as you turn the storybook pages.

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## PLAY IS EVERYWHERE

Many caregivers joined Play Every Day thinking that they lacked the resources and time to create meaningful play experiences. With tested ideas from around the world, Play Every Day showed them how everyday found materials could be used in a myriad ways to create rich, enjoyable experiences. **Caregivers learnt to spot play opportunities everywhere and in everything.** Counting and sorting laundry, making a pretend restaurant with plates and spoons or creating a sing-along story while cleaning up, allowed play to run alongside caregivers' chores. All it took was a little imagination.



*"I always thought toys cost a lot of money. Who would have thought that playing with waste material lying around the house could keep us happy and busy for hours?"*

**21%**

*Increase in caregiver ability to make everyday activities playful in India.*

Mother and son enjoy playing with a 'royal umbrella' that the son has created, in Delhi, India.







• This boy in Mexico tests different ways to construct a mask with recycled materials. He is excited at his toy mask that he completed after repeated trial and error.

8%

Increase in caregiver confidence in use of recycled materials as play objects in Mexico.

*"At first, I felt uncomfortable having to construct something without scissors or glue ... We overcame frustration when we couldn't build ... but we used imagination and creativity to figure it out!"*

*"I'm a single parent and I'm not working, so for me, I'm able to play with my kids and I don't have to pay anything."*

19%

Increase in caregiver ability to make everyday activities playful in South Africa.



• A boy plays with this toy car that he made from an empty milk box and bottle caps, in Zandspruit, Johannesburg, South Africa.



## I CAN BE ON TV

Play is everywhere. Use everyday materials to create rich, enjoyable experiences with your child. It is easy to play with your child. You can easily do this activity at home or anywhere else, all you need is a few recycled materials and you are good to go.

### TRY IT YOURSELF!

Use a box to cut out the shape of a TV frame and ask your child to think about their favorite movie or TV program. Ask the child to pretend to be on TV and act out their favorite story in the TV frame. Explain to the child that they can pretend to be reporters in a news report or characters in a show.



## PLAY IS BONDING

One of the most heartening outcomes of Play Every Day was the difference it made to the caregiver-and-child relationship. As caregivers learnt how to engage and to let their children lead play, many reported that they were discovering new things about their children and felt closer to them than they had ever felt before. What a difference it would make if the same transformation took place within families across the world.





A young boy shares an animated, jungle story with his father in New Delhi, India.



23%

Increase in caregiver comfort in being silly with their children in India.

*"My son loves it when I join him in some funny game. It makes me a less distant dad and I find that he trusts me more because we laugh and play together."*

*"My son amazed me as he called out all the names of the planets and told me fun facts about outer space. I just discovered that he wants to be an Astronaut so he can count the stars and visit the planets. I wasn't aware that he knew all of this!"*

10%

Increase in caregivers' time spent with their children reading storybooks or telling stories or rhymes in Mexico.



A boy in Mexico dressed up as an astronaut with recycled materials, pretending to travel in space as he tells his mother all about space!





..... This mother in Diepsloot, Johannesburg, South Africa, is having a joyful storytelling moment with her child.

**26%**

Increase in caregivers' time spent with their children reading storybooks or telling stories or rhymes in South Africa.

*"The new thing I learnt about myself is that I haven't been spending enough time with my son. ... He will end up thinking I don't love him. Some things don't need to be left like that. I should focus on my son and make him my priority [by playing with him]."*

## MY NEIGHBORHOOD

Cardboard, paint and a lot of imagination - your toy neighborhood is now ready to explore.

Children spoke. Parents listened. For many, it was the first time they had heard their children express views and aspirations.

### ..... TRY IT YOURSELF! .....

Construct a neighborhood with any material you find easily. Ask your child about the people who live there. Ask about the services in the neighborhood. How many homes and schools does it have? Is there a hospital? Where do people wash and bathe? Where do they throw garbage? Ask your child that if he could be one of the helpful people in the neighborhood, who would he be?





## PLAY TODAY, PLAY TOMORROW, PLAY EVERY DAY

One of the key milestones of Sustainable Development Goals 4 is to ensure that by 2030, “all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.”

The initiative by Sesame Workshop and the LEGO Foundation gives children in low-resource settings access to meaningful, early learning experiences, building a strong base for future learning.

By transforming the quality of the caregiver-child relationship, the Play Every Day methodologies can create enabling environments that help every child grow smarter, stronger and kinder.







The LEGO Foundation

