

***Superhero Play Handout***  
***By Mrs. U***

***Good things that can emerge from superhero games***

The good things about superpower or superheroes play are that the games help children:

1. - control their fears, overcome barriers
- 2.-cope with adversity and express feelings
- 3.-develop language
- 4.-discern the big questions of good and bad- real and pretend, right and wrong
- 5.-discuss values; best way to resolve problems
6. - learn to respect others
- 7.-rules are important to set up and apply consistently
- 8.-communicate to understand the game. Sharing the meaning of the game and role-play can be enhanced.
- 9.-talk about safety by talking about what is permitted or not permitted
- 10.-there is action and gross motor, physical development--- the running climbing?
- 11.-imagination and creativity -use of stories - creating adventure not subscribing only to the role of a prescribed hero attached to a limiting story line.
- 12.-the use of figurines. while it can be limiting, it can also be expanded by integrating other play areas like block construction with other props, cars, animals, people etc. The hero play can be integrated to painting and construction story telling.

***Parents Fears that need to be addressed***

- 1.Games turn aggressive and someone can get hurt.
2. The use of aggression as a way to solve a problem.
- 3.Some games support prejudice and identify bad people as members of certain groups either racial or cultural. (The research shows that the stereotypes come from other sources rather than superhero play).
4. Use of weapons and swords that can injure other children.
5. Use of guns during play, therefore encountering the danger of real guns since they are very similar to toy guns. The fear that children will become obsessed about guns is worrisome.
6. The fear that a child could become the victim. Or the fear that one's child would become the aggressor.
7. Fear that children would imitate superheroes in doing physical actions that involve characters of TV shows, leaping windows, jumping on moving cars, throwing things at others, etc. point out what is pretend and what is real (as much as possible talk about what is real and what is not ).
8. Fear that children will become part of a gang. This fear can be real if not addressed properly; people join gangs for entirely different reason.

All these fears are reasonable. However, if you ban the game, all these fears will still dominate since one loses the opportunity to deal with these issues. Prohibiting

something means one has to reinforce the rule. Depending how and when one decides to reinforce that rule the simple fact that the child wants to play superheroes becomes a power struggle between parent and child.

One might even induce some shame to something that is somewhat natural. What is worse, the child might feel guilty when playing a game that is banned in the family and the child plays the game behind the parents' back.

### ***Rules***

Rules should be stated. Not all at the same time since that can be overwhelming but as the opportunities arrive. The solutions are many and there is a way of managing this kind of play.

1. SAFETY everyone must be safe,
2. The game should stop if anyone feels unsafe.
3. Hurting is not acceptable.
4. Hitting is for baseballs.
5. Kicking the ball is permissible.
6. Never hit or kick a person.
7. Find a base.
8. No pushing pulling or grabbing even for adults (this should be clarified if the adult feels comfortable grabbing or being held. (Jail).for example
9. No toy weapons.
10. Running with free hands.
11. Sticks belong on the floor or ground.
12. Only persons who agree with participating in the game should be in it (did you want to be chased?).
13. Capes or dress up props should be secure so children will not trip with them; long capes with strings to the neck are not safe.
14. Determine when and where the superhero games can take place.
15. Pointing at living things is unacceptable, pointing at a person or animal not permitted.

### ***Class tips to deal with power play***

Depending on the age of the children and how much you as a teacher or parent can tolerate one can use the following practical tips in the class:

1. The bad guys are imaginary or people have to take turns being the good guys and bad guys.
2. Feelings of exclusion should be stated that all children can play, create a safe space where one stands when they want out of the game. Timid children need help holding hands with a safe adult.
3. Explain the plot of the objective of the game (little wolf) (chase game) (troll) (Abiyoyo) (Jail) (Ginger bread man)
4. Sometime some actions can be hurtful; explain the process (not pointing at people)

laser light saver light tag

5. When children are playing the role they have it might get too intense. Jail-- observe the game so the person affected can calm down reminding that it is only pretend ( distinguish real and pretend )
6. Negotiate the terms of the play
7. Adults can participate in the game to stimulate plots or suggest changes to the actions. (Be aware of the space; when reaching at children watch where they are backing up to).
8. When playing being the monster, make sure the adult is a safe person. The fact that an adult is playing to be the monster (parent), make sure that his or her child is OK with the game. Remember that CHILDREN SWITCH ROLES VERY FAST.
8. Define the role of the hero- explain that a hero helps and safeguards others.
9. Determine clearly the when, where and how the game can take place.
10. When playing indoors with figurines make sure the children use the figurines properly (dinosaurs) the same child can hold the good guy and the bad guy and the actions should be directed to the figurines not the child who is holding the figurine, you can only do so with your own figures not with the ones being held by another child.
11. When destroying a building which is very common it can be done with common agreement or only to the structure that is built by the child doing the tumbling
12. No wrestling or tackling (football encourages that, explain that the players have protective equipment and they have a knowledgeable coach)--none of which is part of the preschool equipment.
13. Children like to transfer what is allowed at home and think the same applies at school. When there is snow on the ground, create a target away from the children. Make an area that is acceptable to throw snowballs.

#### PARENTS possible SOLUTIONS TO POWER PLAY

1. Set limits to where when and how to play heroes
2. Respect. - People, playmates and house rules and property.
3. Outdoors is for running and chasing
4. Limit TV watching, or watch the program with the children so that there is an understanding with your child about the good and questionable parts about the show.
5. Allow children to make more choices in their daily life so that they have more real sense of power over their games and the events of the day let them choose their playmates for the day, what they wear or eat at certain part of the day. Give choices of two acceptable alternatives. Negotiate if the child has other ideas that are not being presented by you.
6. When the opportunity arrives show a child what a real life hero is all about. Talk about the fireman and military, doctors, EMS ----Point how they are being helpful and how they save lives. Also talk about explorers their important accomplishments and findings for example Ocean explorers space pioneers, Oil workers, forest rangers, etc.
7. State how certain games do not appeal to you (parent story) play with your child for a short time and then move it to more creative realms; orient the game in a more creative way, build a moat or a space craft with your child.
8. Redirect and expand the scope of scenarios (field trips) so role-playing can take another twist and then the pretend play and heroes will be more real like a Doctor an

Explorer who finds dinosaurs.

9. Read books about heroes and adventures that will give new and exciting scenario themes.

10. Build castles, talk about fairy tales and knights, dragons that are helpful.

11. Gun toys presence in the house is a personal choice. Don't give a child a birthday present of a gun since that is a personal philosophy of the family and it might create a problem; not pointing at people or animals.

12. Stress the importance of not picking up a real gun

13. If you think a playmate's family has a gun, talk to the parents about the concern and make sure that there are safety measures in place.

14. When appropriate make sure someone who knows about guns can explain the children the whys guns are dangerous (Story about child who thought there was poison in bullets). 15. Make sure they understand the rules that if they find a gun they can follow the DTTA rule which is---- Do not touch tell an Adult --- do not assume it is a toy.

**GUNS ARE NOT TOYS**