

Review

PLAYPOWER

BIRTH TO 3 YEARS: MAKING THE MOST OF EVERYDAY MOMENTS

A new parent workshop package for professionals working with families who have infants and toddlers

Produced by the Benevolent Society

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The following review is by Angela Stephenson, an early childhood specialist working with diverse groups of parents in Adelaide. She uses The Benevolent Society's PlayPower Parent Workshop with her parent groups who have babies and toddlers. She is finding that the workshop activities and resources are both accessible and flexible, and that they help the parents to use everyday moments to engage with their young children, to learn how they grow and develop, and to understand why simple, playful interactions throughout the day are necessary for healthy brain development.

I implement a community-based workshop program with groups throughout metropolitan Adelaide. Having been introduced to the work of PlayPower and how their workshops are delivered, I wished to use their format, as is, in my work with groups of parents. It was with much enthusiasm that I trialled the Workshop Package and am now implementing the official program.

PlayPower is built on our understanding that children develop through play—but also that interactions between parent and child can support, delay or arrest their development. Attachment occurs through sensitive caregiving whereby a parent or primary care-giver responds to the needs of the young infant or child, whether that is their needs for comfort or interaction. Optimal learning conditions require effective regulation (of emotion and engagement, for example), and regulation is known to occur through constant care in those attachment relationships. PlayPower's notion of using 'everyday moments' brings children into regular and positive interaction with their parents—so connection becomes an ongoing aspect of their busy lifestyle, not one component of it. PlayPower participants also explore the child's perspective to help parents identify with and better understand their children.

The workshop is accessible to a myriad of diverse client groups through the simplified child development information, 'everyday moment' activities, and 'non-toy' suggestions shared during the workshop. Importantly, it normalises and legitimises the experience of parents not

being comfortable or confident in, or otherwise committed to, playing with their infants or young children. The diverse groups I've worked with include working parents with little time for play, those parenting with mild intellectual disability, grandparents, young mothers, domestic violence clients and parents who are not the custodians of their own children. Soon I will be holding the PlayPower Workshop with a group of young parents experiencing homelessness.

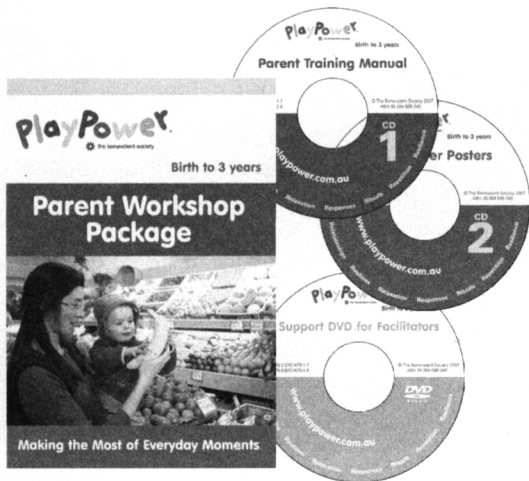
The workshop training manual is designed in such a way that time can be taken moving through the activities. This may be important for groups that need longer to digest information or for the purposes of exploring concepts further. An example of this would be an activity such as 'describing play' which may need further exploration in a parent group where the family has experienced domestic violence. Or it may be effective, and necessary, to just create the space to recognise, feel and heal. This could be true for many parents, for differing reasons, as they begin to experience and explore their discomfort with play, perhaps because of a lack of play in their childhood relationships with their own parents. The Parent Workshop Package also includes sample PlayPower Books, a support DVD for facilitators and a CD of 25 PlayPower Posters.

The flexibility of this package will see its utility for a myriad of professionals and volunteers in their work with parent groups. The package is well set out with adequate explanation, uses and includes necessary resources, and acts as a complete and entertaining introduction to the PlayPower books supplied to parents to take home. This wonderful training resource can now be accessed by so many organisations nation-wide, including in remote areas, which are striving, and sometimes struggling, to engage and support parents in learning about 'play' and its necessity.

Reviewed by
Angela Stephenson

While stocks last, PlayPower are offering a starter pack of 8 infant and 8 toddler books in the package. For more information about the PlayPower Workshop Package and PlayPower Books and Posters, telephone 1300 727 157 or visit: www.playpower.com.au

A New PlayPower Parent Workshop Package for Professionals Working with Families Who Have Infants & Toddlers



- Parent Training Manual for Facilitators
- 25 PlayPower Posters
- Support DVD for Facilitators
- 2 sample PlayPower Books

Everything professionals need to run their own PlayPower Parent Workshop

Helping parents to:

- understand why play is necessary for healthy brain development and how it strengthens attachment between parent and child
- understand how infants and toddlers grow and develop
- make the most of everyday routines to promote physical, cognitive, language and social/emotional growth.



Package Price: \$200 (with a license agreement that entitles your organisation to run unlimited Parent Workshops for 2 years) + the cost of PlayPower Books for participants to keep (\$11.95 each for bulk orders). The books, *PlayPower: Birth to 1 year* and *PlayPower: 1 to 3 years*, are an integral part of the workshop, providing ongoing reinforcement of workshop messages and a wealth of activities, rhymes, tips and development information.