

## The Tools for Imagination and Dreams

Children begin participating in pretend play, or make-believe, by their second year of life.

They are able to distinguish between real and not real and play imaginative games.

Their ability to recognize the difference between reality and *imagination* provides opportunities for divergent thinking and the creative powers of their brains to bring forth remarkable new possibilities.

The tools I provide will help you bring the powerful Essential of *Imagination and Dreams* into your child's daily life.

### 1. Let's Play:

- Play is one of the most common ways to activate a child's *imagination*.
- So much of what we do with our children, and what we ask them to do, is very serious and structured. It is usually even more so with a child who has special needs, particularly when they are receiving therapy and extra tutoring.
- Any opportunity to turn these activities into a game filled with imagination makes those activities more fun and effective.
- It brings levity, joy, and interest to the experience your child is having.
- By doing so, your child will become more engaged; this will actually upgrade the organizational capabilities of your child's brain and wake up its creative powers.

### 2. Co-Imagine with Your Child:

- Your child might be limited in the ability to imagine at this time.
- Begin introducing imaginary ideas and suggestions as you are interacting with your child.
- While doing this, look for any signs that your child is trying to join in.
- If your child can talk, listen very carefully and integrate what your child suggests into the image, story, or game that you're creating.

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- Do not change or correct what your child brings in!
  - Don't worry if it doesn't make much sense in the beginning or if somehow your child presented it in a faulty way.
  - It's their first approximation.
  - It needs to be nourished and appreciated as is.
  - And it's all imaginary anyway.
  - No one can do it wrong.
3. **If your child cannot talk or express themselves very well yet**, and you see your child is trying to participate, ask yes or no questions, lots of questions.
- A 'Yes', can be a blink of the eye or a tiny movement in the index finger, for example.
  - So you might say, "And does the bunny go to sleep now (in the imaginary story) or is the bunny playing with her brother?"
  - Wait for the child's response and integrate their choice into your cocreated imagery.
4. **Discover the Dream:**
- When you notice that your child is spacing out when they are supposed to be paying attention or listening or following instructions, back off for a moment.
  - Let your child be in their space, whatever that may be.
  - If your child is very young, just leave them alone for a moment and wait for them to come back.
  - If your child is old enough to understand your request, very gently, and in a friendly and loving tone, after giving some time, tell them: "I'm so interested to know what you are doing now in your mind. Could you tell me?"
  - If your child doesn't seem to understand, create a fantasy of your own that you can share with them and then ask your child if they have one to share with you.
  - Most kids will pick up on this and cooperate very quickly.
  - With an even older child you can ask them to write down their daydream or they can dictate it to you while you write it down for them.
  - Make sure that you do not use the *daydreams* to try to manipulate your child to do what you want them to do or hope they will be able to do.

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- i. So if your child is frightened by the noise of a vacuum cleaner, do not make up a daydream where you tell them that they are not afraid.
- ii. Or if your child cannot run, you do not recount to them your own daydream where they walk or run.
- Make sure it is your child's dream.

**5. Take a Co-Daydream Break:**

- Next time you are with your child and they are a bit stuck or resistant to what you are trying to have them do, stop and take a co-daydreaming break.
- You have probably done a similar thing many times where you describe to your child something you are going to be doing later with them, something you know they like, as a way of calming them down or having your child stay focused on what they doing at the moment.
- Here you intentionally daydream and imagine with your child.
- You can say to your child something like: "Okay, let's take a break here [from doing homework] and think of somewhere you would like to be right now."
- After your child tells you where they want to be, you can embellish it a bit. "You'd like to be outside on the climbing structure? Oh and on the tire swing." Bring in more detail, even imaginary beings and things beyond the real.
- Then ask your child to describe what they would be doing if they were there right now. You can be there with her or not, depending on what they want.
- You can introduce movement and music to the dream.
- Maybe you sing a song or introduce dancing movements.
- Notice how your child comes to life.
- At times you might be able to connect the content of the co-daydreaming with where your child was stuck or simply co-daydream with them in any topic they are interested in and see whether your child can all of the sudden problem solve where they were stuck earlier.

**6. Story Telling:**

- Story telling is one of the ultimate ways to imagine and daydream.

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- Encourage your child to tell you her own stories, their own *daydreams*, even write them down for them and read them back on another day. Perform—play act—the *dreams*, or portions of the *dreams*.
  - Wherever your child has limitations, work around them with *imagination*. You and your child can make believe anything.
  - Have your child plan scenarios and act out those scenarios for a fair amount of time.
  - Act out the stories, using everyday items as props.
  - Write them down, and add to them later.
  - Become animated in your expression; this will wake up your child's brain to create new connections and possibilities.
- 7. Don't put limitations on your, or your child's *dreams*,**
- 8. Don't put limitations on your, or your child's *imagination*.**
- 9. Create situations for yourself, and for yourself with your child to play with divergent thinking,** intentionally explore divergent thinking.
- 10. Honor Your Child's *Dreams*:**
- *Dreams* call to us from our future.
  - They organize our brains and provide the wind under our wings that lift us to our greatest heights of achievement.
  - It is of utmost importance for each of us to have a dream, big or small, something we strive for, something that we feel we are called by and that we are on a path to fulfill.
  - Your child has *dreams* too.
  - Always remember that they are their *dreams*, not yours.
  - Your child's *dreams* are not your *dreams* and hopes for them.
  - Honor your child's *dreams*, take an interest in them, treat them with respect.
  - *Dreams*, by their nature, are not rational and cannot be justified; they just are.
  - They often grow and change as the child matures.
  - I recall working with a teenage girl with mild cerebral palsy whose dream was to become a dancer.

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- i. Even though it was quite clear that she was unlikely to be hired by a professional dance troop, everything we did was in the context of her dancing.
- ii. And she did indeed dance! She blossomed; she grew to love her body despite its limitation.
- iii. She was empowered!

**11. Free to Invent:**

- The more you work with *Imagination* and *Dreams*, the more you and your child will find yourselves inventing your own ways of bringing this Essential into your lives.

***You know your child best. Go for it.***

***Have fun on the road to discovering new possibilities.***