

Daily tips for Playful Learning at Home – Number 17

A space of my own!

Children often love to crawl into small spaces, hide away from everyone, gather their treasures or pretend to be somewhere else. In this space they can have some quiet time, to relax or play and be on their own.

All they might need is to be on a sofa with a fleecy blanket, on their bed, in a cosy corner or in a 'den'.

What do I need?

Keep it simple, what will work best in the space you have: blanket/ sheet/ fleece over a table, pegs, play tent, big cardboard box, clothes horse, under a table, the corner of a sofa, a special chair, a bed tent.

Add in: Fairy lights, a torch, nightlight, a favourite toy or book, sensory toys, teddy or doll, cushions, blanket/ fleece, CD/MP3 player for music, songs and stories
But not all at the same time! Keep it soothing and calming.

What do we do?

Think about your child. Where do they like to go when they are upset? Do they already have a place they go to be alone? What could you add to that space to make it theirs?

Try making a 'den' together so they can take part in deciding what it needs. Use anything you have readily available.

Think about what activities your child could do in the space and provide the things they would need. They may enjoy playing imaginative games where the space becomes a rocket, a hideout, a hospital space, etc. They might like it as a story corner or to listen to music or story CDs. They may prefer to use it as a sensory space and just relax in it. Some children may like to use it as a break from social interaction or they might invite you in to play with them. Siblings may be happy playing in it together or you may need more than one!

Sometimes a child really does need a space of their own to help get them through the day. They may need 'Den' time built into their daily routine. Use the space regularly to prevent them becoming over alert, overwhelmed or stressed. A child may need the space some days more than others but its good if it can be always there.

If you have the space, try to keep it in the same place every day. If you do need to put it away at night make it something simple to put up again.

What will your child learn from this play?

The world around us can be very busy, noisy and sometimes just overwhelming.

Being in a quiet, cosy place can help young children feel more secure, comfortable and better able to cope with the world around them.

It can help them learn to self-regulate.

It can give them a physical break from social interactions.

How can you take it further?

Dens are great places for reading stories and for making them up

You can have chats with your child about what can help them feel safe

Use lots of words like "cosy" "den" "warm" etc – any, really – that your child can learn

***Play & talk together
Be careful with too many questions***

***Pause and wait for your child to respond
Copy what they say and add to it***