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Play is Serious Business: Research Supports Play’s Critical Role in Healthy Childhood Development
American Families Encouraged to Take “Play Pledge” at theGeniusofPlay.org

NEW YORK, NY | June 24, 2015 – A new research-backed initiative was launched today encouraging parents and caregivers across the nation to take time out of their hectic lives to allow their children to build critical skills through the simple act of play. Aptly called “[The Genius of Play](http://TheGeniusofPlay.org),” the initiative is designed to remind families that playtime is more than just fun and games – it strengthens minds and bodies, reduces stress, builds family bonds, and offers a whole host of benefits that help to produce well-rounded, healthy children.

“Today’s parents and caring adults can be too singularly focused on their children getting good grades, staying disciplined, and mastering a number of structured extracurricular activities, but that can come at a cost. What many parents don’t realize is that pediatricians recommend that children spend at least *60 minutes* a day engaged in open-ended play – including arts & crafts, playing dress-up, building imaginary worlds, and so much more,” said Steve Pasierb, President & CEO of the Toy Industry Association (TIA). “Through play, children learn about the world around them, explore their creativity, build important skills, and work through their emotions. The positive impact of play on the healthy development of kids, from tots to teens, is undeniable. Our goal is to inspire parents to make play an important part of their children’s day – every day!”

At the heart of The Genius of Play is a series of [short videos](#) in digital and social media that tell the story of human development through play. The animated vignettes connect play “moments” to specific developmental milestones and life skills that kids learn while they are having fun. Parents, caregivers and play lovers everywhere are encouraged to visit www.TheGeniusOfPlay.org, where they can watch and share the videos and browse many play tips, fun facts, cool toy picks, expert advice, and much more – all designed to get the whole family excited about playing together.

Parents and children across the nation are also being asked to take the [Play Pledge](#) and help guarantee 1,000,000 hours of beneficial play this year! Once the goal of a million play hours has been reached, a charitable donation will be made to The Toy Bank, an international giving program that makes play possible for children in need around the world.

The Genius of Play is supported by research and inspired by insights from interviews with renowned academics, psychologists, journalists and other play-focused professionals. Top-line research indicates that play builds critical cognitive, physical and social/emotional skills. According to Dr. Anne Marie Albano, Professor of Medical Psychology at Columbia University Medical Center and Director of the Columbia University Clinic for Anxiety and Related Disorders, play is “essential for the enrichment of the developing child.”

“From play, the child will try out and refine essential social skills and will gain a wider and deeper ability to reason and solve problems,” said Dr. Albano. “Play allows the child to enlarge his or her capacity to understand and

engage with the larger world while providing an outlet for everyday stress through exercise and allowing positive emotional growth. It also provides the child with the essential building blocks to take on life and all its joys and challenges.”

Additional Genius of Play research has found that play transcends cultural and geographic boundaries and is necessary to the well-being of children the world over; creates and transforms the brain’s neural pathways, enabling children to learn and process new information; and helps children cope with pain, fear and anxiety.

*Join the conversation! Follow the Toy Industry Association on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) to share facts, fun tips, and your own stories about *The Genius of Play*.*

Downloadable media assets, including videos and video stills, infographics and other information, can be found at www.thegeniusofplay.org/assets.

About the Toy Industry Association (TIA)

TIA is the not-for-profit trade association representing all businesses involved in creating and delivering toys and youth entertainment products for kids of all ages. Toy safety is the number one priority for the toy industry. TIA has a long history of leadership in toy safety, having helped develop the first comprehensive toy safety standard more than 30 years ago. TIA continues to work with government, consumers and industry on ongoing programs to ensure safe and fun play. For more information, please visit www.toyassociation.org or www.thegeniusofplay.org.