

# Loose Parts Play



Loose parts play is play led by the child with materials or 'junk' that children can adapt, move, design, and transform in any way.

The more flexibility a material or space has the more opportunities children have for creative experimentation. Loose parts play encourages children to navigate their experiences naturally and it is powerful in nurturing creativity, imagination, and cognitive, sensory, and physical learning. It is most effective with a collaborative, inclusive and rights-based approach where children's thoughts, feelings, and opinions are listened to, acted upon and included - empowering all involved.

Families and educators play a vital role in facilitating environments and experiences that enable children to engage in loose parts play and for all involved to experience the many benefits of open-ended play. It can be easy to involve your children in playing and collecting loose parts at home and at OSHC as loose parts are inexpensive, endless, and can be found at home in your recycling bins, and on walks or adventures in nature.

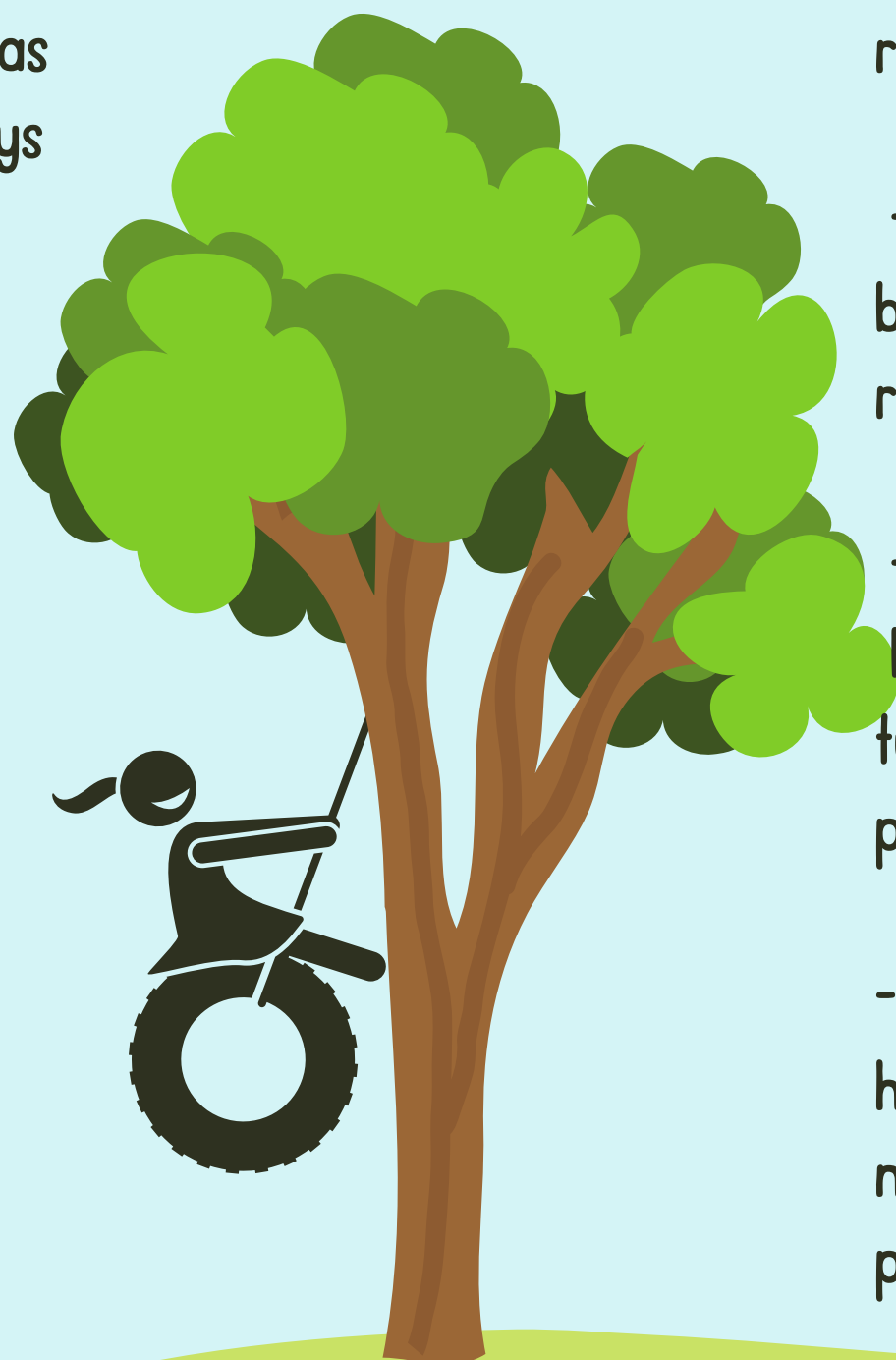
## Benefits

- Develops independence, autonomy, resilience and sense of agency as children explore loose parts
- Increases critical thinking and problem-solving as children explore materials and discover new ways to play
- Develops sense of belonging and identity by catering for whatever intrinsic motivation children have
- Builds collaboration, turn-taking, negotiation and social communication skills by providing children with opportunities to interact with peers/siblings
- Increases physical activity, gross, and fine motor skills as children move and interact with their creations
- Creates opportunities to explore risk taking behaviours within a safe and nurturing environment
- Develops social and emotional regulation skills which may decrease challenging behaviours

## Loose Parts

The list is endless but can include:

- Natural materials such as pine cones, sticks, rocks, leaves, shells, seedpods, logs, dirt, logs
- Craft items such as pipe cleaners, beads, buttons, paddle pop sticks, feathers, chalk, ribbon, pom-poms, sheets, straws, rope
- Household items such as egg cartons, bottle caps, paper towel and toilet paper tubes, pegs, tin foil, pool noodles, sheets, pillows, tarps, pots and pans
- Objects such as boxes, pipes, buckets, hula hoops, trays, wood scraps, blocks, tyres, nets, cones, milk and bread crates, wooden pallets, cardboard, foam mats





## Parents' role

- **Watch, wait, support**, give more time, and offer encouragement depending on children's needs
- **Get involved** only when invited or you observe that a child requires support
- **Appreciate children's creations** and ask open ended questions such as: what can you tell me about this... what else can you do with... how might you use... what happens when ... what could you change?
- **Actively collect and donate any suitable materials** by increasing recycling in your home, going out and collecting materials in nature, or from kerbside collection, and other friends/families
- **Understand the benefits of loose parts play** so you can educate other parents/families on the important role it plays in your children's development
- **Regularly encourage your children in this play at home** as it promotes an outstanding level of continuity between school, OSHC, and home life.

By continuing loose parts play at home, families and children may experience more benefits of loose parts play, as children have more opportunities to navigate their experiences and develop their physical, social and emotional skills.



## Connection between loose parts play, the OSHC curriculum and National Quality Standards

Loose parts play aligns with all **7 OSHC National Quality standards**. Firstly, integration of loose parts play in the program ensures child centered practice as each child's agency, decision making, and strengths are promoted. Secondly, children's health and safety are promoted as loose parts play creates opportunities for cognitive, sensory and physical learning and benefits their physical and mental wellbeing. Thirdly, loose parts play creates stimulating learning opportunities and environments where both built and natural physical environments are explored. Autonomously or collaboratively children engage in play-based learning with resources that allow for multiple uses as children can move, alter, create, and use parts however they want. Loose parts play aligns with the last 4 areas as children can develop emotional and social communication, regulation, and relationship building skills as they have the opportunity to collaborate, learn from, and help their peers. Children can learn how to regulate and effectively communicate their own behaviours and the behaviours of others in loose parts play. Loose parts play encourages relationships with families and businesses by collecting and donating loose parts that develop a successful, engaging and sustainable program for the children.

Loose parts play also aligns with the **5 learning outcomes in the OSHC curriculum, "My Time, Our Place"**. Loose parts allow children to develop their own learning experiences through their own exploration of themselves, as well as the changing world around them. The open-ended nature of loose parts guides children in developing their sense of autonomy and identity. Further, loose parts contributes to the view children have on the world around them, and by finding the value in the little things that inhabit the world, they are developing deep-rooted respect for the world around them. Loose parts also promotes health and well-being in a multitude of ways; physical, social and emotional health are all critical to one's well-being, and the hands on physical nature, and frequent need for collaboration in loose parts play combines to create an experience that benefits all 3 areas. Loose parts encourage children to take risks and lends confidence for them to take control of their own learning. And lastly, children become effective communicators through loose parts play as they often are required to collaborate with peers, explain their creations and ask questions using verbal and non-verbal methods.



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