GROWING little MINDS

PURPOSEFUL PLAY

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD THROUGH PLAY

A Growing Little Minds
Parent Guide



Play. Explore. Connect. Grow.

EVERY CHILD STARTS SOMEWHERE DIFFERENT



Young children enter new experiences in their own way.

Some jump right in.
Some watch carefully first.
Some stay close to a familiar adult.
Some immediately begin touching, moving and exploring everything around them.

At Growing Little Minds, we pay attention to those differences.

We notice how children explore, communicate, solve problems, respond to others and approach something new.

Our goal is not for every child to respond in the same way.

Our goal is to meet children where they are and give them meaningful opportunities to grow from there.

REMEMBER

Every child brings their own strengths, interests and way of approaching the world.

Growing Little Minds brings the Growing IQ approach to our youngest learners through thoughtful observation, purposeful play and experiences that meet children where they are.



MORE THAN JUST FUN

Play is how children learn, grow and make sense of the world.

Play is not a break from learning - it is learning. Through play, children explore ideas, test possibilities, build skills and develop confidence. It helps them make connections, ask questions and discover who they are.

THROUGH PLAY, CHILDREN:

EXPLORE

They experiment, ask "what if?" and discover new ideas.

BUILD SKILLS

They develop language, problem-solving, creativity and more.

CONNECT

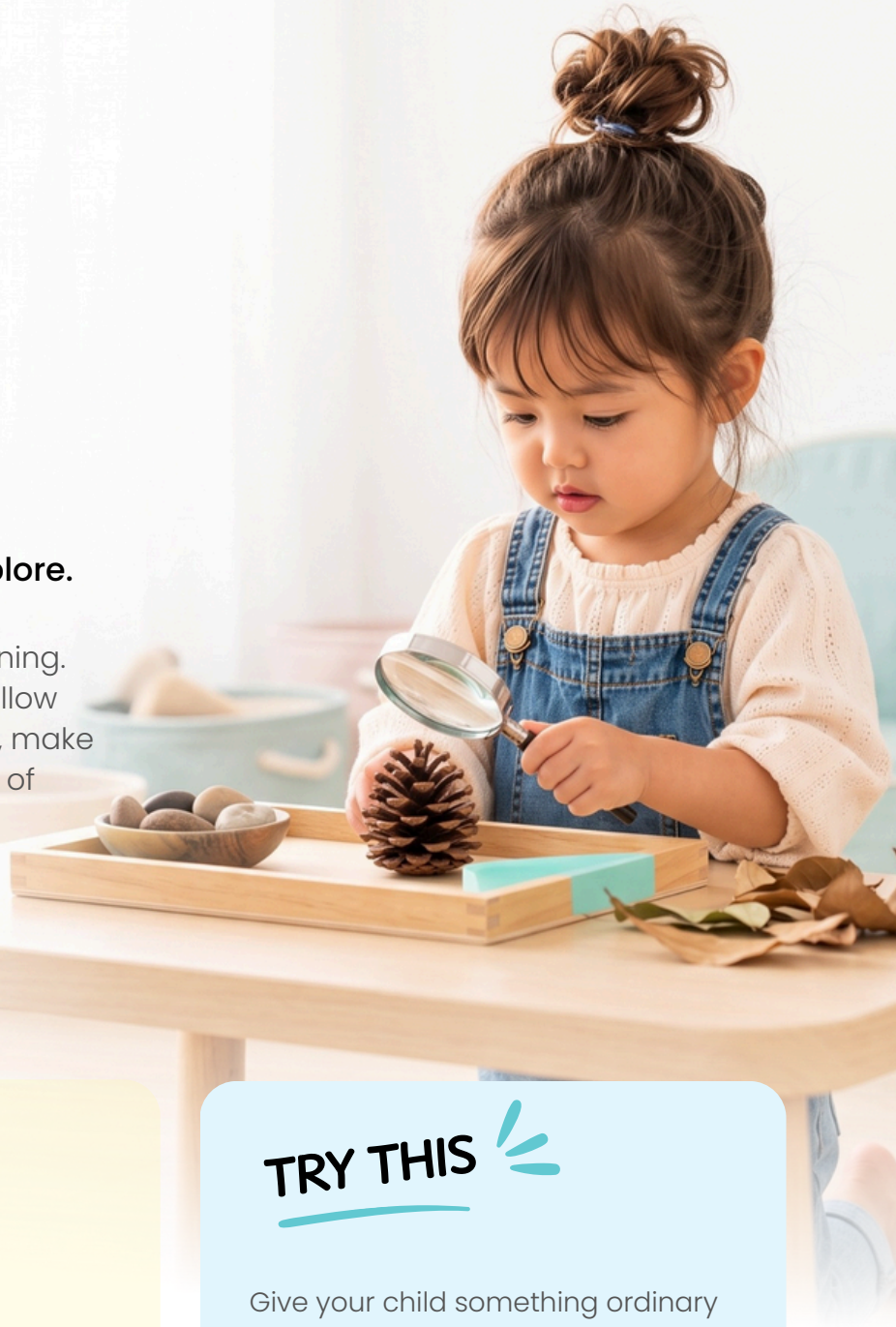
They learn to share, communicate and see different perspectives.

GROW

They build confidence, resilience and a positive mindset - skills that last a lifetime.

REMEMBER: Play looks different at every age and stage. There's no single "right" way to play - what matters is that your child feels free to explore, be curious and enjoy the process.

CURIOSITY BUILDS BRIGHT MINDS



Children are naturally curious.
They notice, wonder, ask and explore.

Curiosity is the starting point for learning. When children are encouraged to follow their interests, they build confidence, make connections and develop the habits of inquiry and critical thinking that will support them for years to come.

CURIOSITY CAN LOOK LIKE...

- Noticing small details
- Repeating an experiment
- Opening and closing things to see how they work
- Asking "why?"
- Trying something another way

TRY THIS

Give your child something ordinary to investigate - a leaf, shell, pinecone, cup of water or an interesting household object.

Let them look closely, touch it, turn it over, ask questions and make their own discoveries. Resist the urge to step in or give the answer right away. Their questions are a big part of the learning.

You don't always need to give them the answer.



LITTLE MOMENTS LEAD TO BIG LEARNING

Learning doesn't only happen in a classroom. It happens every day, everywhere.

Children learn through the small, ordinary moments of daily life - cooking together, getting dressed, running errands, reading a book or exploring outside. These experiences build real skills, confidence and connection.

Everyday moments matter.

Look for learning in:

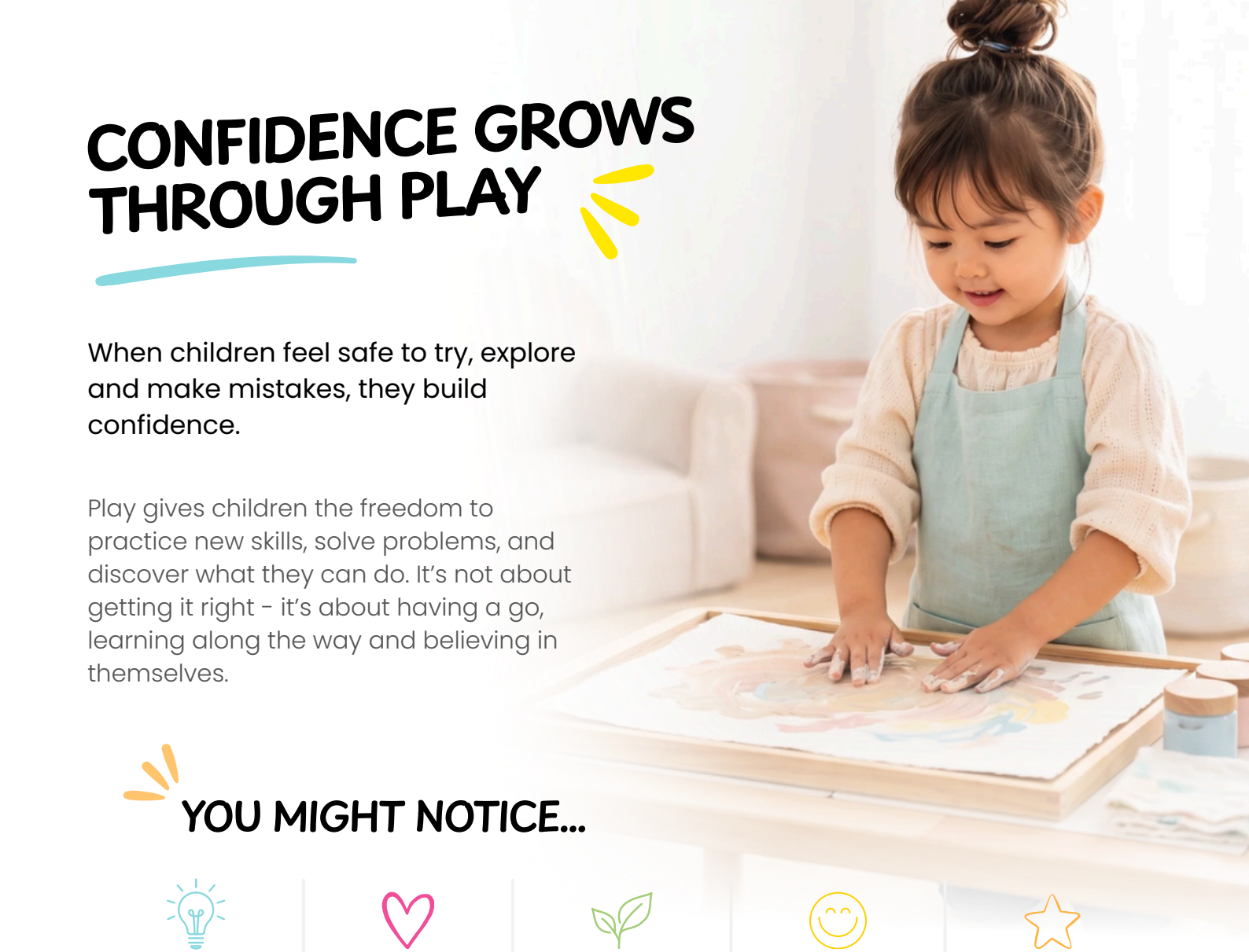
- Cooking together
- Getting dressed
- Running errands
- Reading a book
- Exploring outside
- Everyday routines

TRY THIS

Turn an everyday moment into a learning moment. For example:

- Invite your child to help measure ingredients while cooking.
- Notice together what you see on a walk - colors, quantities, patterns and changes.
- Let them make simple choices, like which shirt to wear or which route to take.
- When reading together, let them linger, skip ahead or repeat a favorite page. Connection matters more than finishing the book.

CONFIDENCE GROWS THROUGH PLAY



When children feel safe to try, explore and make mistakes, they build confidence.

Play gives children the freedom to practice new skills, solve problems, and discover what they can do. It's not about getting it right - it's about having a go, learning along the way and believing in themselves.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE...

- They keep trying, even when it's challenging.
- They take pride in their efforts.
- They become more independent.
- They show resilience when things don't go as planned.
- They are more willing to take on new challenges.

You can try...

- Offer open-ended toys like blocks, art materials or loose parts.
- Let them lead the play, even if it looks different than you expected.
- Celebrate effort, not just the result.
- Use encouraging words like "I see you trying" or "You figured that out!"
- Give them time - independence takes practice.

Confidence isn't fixed - it grows one experience at a time.



COMMUNICATION STARTS BEFORE WORDS

Your child has been communicating with you long before they can hold a conversation.

Children use gestures, expressions, sounds and actions to share what they see, feel and need. When you notice and respond, you show them they are heard - and that builds confidence, connection and language skills.

Ways children communicate:

Pointing
They show you what they're interested in.

Facial Expressions
They share how they feel.

Sounds and babbling
They experiment with noises and rhythm.

Eye contact
They look to you for connection.

Actions
They reach, give, show or bring things to you.

Early words
They try out new words and copy what they hear.

You can help by:

1. **Narrate what you see**
   "You see the dog! That's a dog."
2. **Pause and wait**
   Give them time to respond in their own way - a sound, a gesture or a word.
3. **Respond with warmth**
   Show that you're listening and that their communication matters.
4. **Copy and build**
   Repeat their sounds and words, then add a little more.

A response doesn't always need words.

When you tune in, follow their lead and show genuine interest, you help your children feel understood - and we give them the foundation for a lifetime of learning.

LEARNING TO BE WITH OTHERS



Social development doesn't always look social at first.

Some children jump right in. Some watch first. Some play beside another child long before they play with that child. All of that can be part of learning how to be with other people.

WATCHING COUNTS

Observation is part of learning.

PLAYING BESIDE COUNTS

Parallel play is meaningful too.

CONNECTION TAKES TIME

Social confidence grows gradually.

TRY THIS

- Model waiting and taking turns.
- Narrate what children are doing.
- Set up short, low-pressure play opportunities.
- Avoid forcing interaction before they're ready.

WORDS YOU CAN USE:

"You're building. She's building too."

"He's using it now. You can have a turn when he's finished."



LET THEM LEAD

Some of the best learning happens when adults don't already know the outcome.

When children have the time and space to explore, they use their creativity, curiosity and problem-solving skills to make sense of the world around them.

FIGURE IT OUT

Children build thinking skills when they:

- Repeat something
- Try another way
- Make a mistake
- Rebuild
- Experiment
- Discover what happens next

EXPLORE

Open-ended materials invite creativity. There's no single right way to play.


Blocks


Scarves


Boxes


Water


Paint


Containers


Natural objects


Safe household items

WAIT BEFORE YOU HELP.

Give them a little more time than feels natural. You might be surprised by what they can figure out on their own.

BIG FEELINGS NEED CALM SUPPORT



Young children have big feelings - and they are still learning what those feelings are and what to do with them. These moments are a normal part of development and an important opportunity to build emotional skills and resilience.

Common big feelings in young children

Frustration

They're still learning how to express and manage feelings.

Clinging

They feel safest close to you.

Wanting independence

They are learning to do more on their own.

Testing boundaries

They are learning what is acceptable, safe and expected.

Crying at separation

It's hard to be away from you.

Big excitement

Happy feelings can also feel overwhelming.

What you can do

1. **Name it**
   Help them understand their feeling.
   You're frustrated.
2. **Stay predictable**
   Use familiar routines and gentle transitions.
   I'm going to the kitchen. I'll be right back.
3. **Keep boundaries calm**
   You can be warm and still hold the limit.
   Food stays on the table.
4. **Reconnect**
   Show them that difficult feelings don't change your relationship.
   You're sad. I understand. I'm here.

Difficult feelings are a normal part of development.

When children feel safe, supported and understood, they build the confidence and emotional skills they need to navigate life's ups and downs.

What if...?

MY CHILD CLINGS TO ME



Share your calm.

Let them warm up while staying close.

MY CHILD CRIES WHEN I LEAVE



Use a short, predictable goodbye

Don't disappear without saying goodbye.

MY CHILD WON'T PLAY WITH OTHERS



Let them watch.

Parallel play is meaningful too.

MY CHILD GETS FRUSTRATED



Name the feeling.

Give them another chance to try.

MY CHILD SAYS "NO!" TO EVERYTHING



Offer two appropriate choices.

"Red cup or blue cup?"

MY CHILD THROWS THINGS



Hold the limit calmly.

"Food stays on the table."

Then, redirect:

"You can throw the ball."

YOU CAN'T PREVENT EVERY REACTION.

You can control how you respond.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE.

Parenting a young child is a journey full of questions, surprises and new discoveries.

Every child develops in their own way and at their own pace. There is no single "right" way to move through these early years.

What matters are the small moments: making time to play, following their curiosity, listening closely, offering comfort and giving them space to try.

You don't have to have every answer.

Notice. Respond. Stay curious together.





SMALL MOMENTS ADD UP.

Thank you for letting Growing Little Minds be part of your child's journey.