

TO LIVE A CREATIVE LIFE, WE MUST LOSE OUR FEAR OF BEING WRONG - JOSEPH CHILTON PEARCE



MAY
2022

THE LINK COMMUNITY HUB

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PLAY OUTSIDE DAY

It's time to create a habit of outdoor play and activity for kids, families, adults and grandparents. What is National Play Outside Day? On the first Saturday of the month, everybody in the nation plays outside. There are no scheduled events or activities, just go

outside and do something fun. Here are some ideas to get you started: Go for a bike ride, have a picnic, bring your toys outside. Explore new parts of your neighbourhood, go on a shell, leaf, flower, stick hunt, ask your kids to make up a game.

NATIONAL FAMILIES' WEEK – MAY 15 - 21

Each year, over a hundred thousand people and hundreds of organisations celebrate National Families Week – Australia's annual celebration of families. The aim of National Families Week is to celebrate the vital role that families play in Australian society. It is a time to celebrate the meaning of family and to make the most of family life.

PUMPKIN MAC AND CHEESE



PREP 25 MIN | COOK 25 MIN SERVES 12

INGREDIENTS

500 grams **orecchiette pasta** (or any small, shaped pasta)

Pumpkin cheese sauce:

4 tablespoons **butter**

4 tablespoons **plain flour**

2 cups (500 ml) **milk**

1 can (400 grams) **pumpkin puree**

1 teaspoon **granulated garlic**

1 teaspoon **dry mustard**

1/4 teaspoon **cayenne white pepper**, *to season*

grating of fresh **nutmeg**

125 grams **mozzarella** & 100

grams **parmesan**, *grated*

Panko topping:

1 1/4 cups **panko style breadcrumbs**

100 grams **mozzarella**, *grated*

METHOD: Preheat oven to 200 C.

To cook the pasta: **Bring** a large pot of water to the boil.

Add salt and pasta and cook according to packet instructions. **Drain** and set aside.

To make the pumpkin cheese sauce: **Place** the butter into a large saucepan over medium heat and melt. **Add** flour and **whisk** to create a smooth paste. **Slowly add** milk, whisking continuously. Continue to **whisk** until slightly thickened, approx. 3 minutes or until the mixture coats the back of a spoon. **Reduce** the heat to low and whisk in the pumpkin puree, garlic, mustard, cayenne and pepper.

Add the cheeses and stir until melted. **Take** off the heat.

Add cooked pasta to the pumpkin mac and cheese sauce and mix thoroughly to combine. **Pour** the pasta mixture into a large baking dish (approx. 45cm x 45cm).

To make the panko topping: **Sprinkle** the panko breadcrumbs and mozzarella cheese evenly over the pasta. **Bake** for 20-25 minutes or until the cheese is melted and breadcrumbs are golden.

App reviews

Time to refresh those apps! Remove ones that are no longer being used and try some new ones.



KHAN ACADEMY KIDS

Khan Academy

Khan academy is thoughtfully designed by experts in early childhood education to guide young learners on a delightful journey through key skills in math, reading, phonics, writing, social-emotional development, and more. It includes thousands of lessons, activities, books, and games that are age-appropriate for preschool through second grade. With catchy songs and yoga videos, your littles will also have fun moving, dancing, and getting the wiggles out.

WELDON - EXPERT PARENT SUPPORT

Family Five Pte. Ltd.

There is a lot of parenting advice out there. Weldon cuts through the noise by connecting you directly with professional parenting experts and evidence-based advice for any parenting challenge.

The curated community of child development experts includes psychologists, therapists, licensed clinical social workers and top parenting coaches.

GONOODLE GAMES

GoNoodle, INC.

Kids love the GoNoodle Games app because it's a blast to play, and parents love it because it gets kids moving! Active Screen

Time: The only way to play GoNoodle Games is to get off the couch and jump, stretch, and pose! Since every mini game requires movement, playing is a great opportunity for kids to wake up their bodies, engage their minds, and get active.



FOCUS: Co-Regulate or Co-Dysregulate.

All children can behave in ways that are ... not very adorable. Big behaviour can be exhausting and maddening for even the calmest of parents. There's a good reason for this. Children create their distress in their important adults as a way to share the emotional load when that load gets too heavy. This is how it's meant to be. In the same way that children weren't meant to carry big physical loads on their own, they also weren't meant to carry big emotional loads. Big feelings and big behaviour are a call to us for support to help them with that emotional load. When you are in front of a child with big feelings, whatever you are feeling is likely to be a reflection of what your child is feeling. If you are frustrated, angry, helpless, scared, it's likely that they are feeling that way too. Every response in you is relevant. Children communicate through behaviour, and behind all big behaviour there will always be a valid need. The need might be for safety, connection, sleep, food, power and influence, space to do their own thing. We all have these needs, but children are still developing the capacity to meet them in ways that aren't as disruptive for them or the people around them. This will take a while. The part of the brain that can calm big feelings, the prefrontal cortex, isn't fully developed until mid to late twenties. Of course, as they grow and develop, they will expand their capacity to calm their big feelings, but in the meantime, they will need lots of co-regulation experiences with us to help them develop strong neural foundations for this.

But how do we help them? The most powerful language for any nervous system is another nervous system. They will catch our distress (as we will catch theirs) but they will also catch our calm. It can be tempting to move them to independence on this too quickly and insist they self-regulate, but it just doesn't work this way. Children can only learn to self-regulate with lots (and lots and lots) of experience co-regulating. Regulation isn't something that can be taught. It's something that has to be experienced through co-regulation over and over. It's like so many things – driving a car, playing the piano – we can talk all we want about 'how' but it's not until we 'do' – over and over – that we get better at it. Emotional regulation works the same way. It's not until children have repeated experiences with an adult bringing them back to calm, that they develop the vital neural pathways to come back to calm on their own.

How exactly do I co-regulate? The first thing to remember is that as much as you might want to fix your young one's feelings, you don't need to. They're safe. They might be struggling, but they're safe. As maddening as those big feelings might be, they're doing an important job – recruiting support (you) to help that young, still-in-development nervous system find its way home. When their feelings are big, it's more about who you are or how you are than what you do. They don't want to be fixed. They want to be seen and heard. They're no different to us like that. Meet them where they are, without needing them to be different for a while. Feel what they feel with a strong, steady heart. They will feel you there with them. They will see it in you and feel it in you that you get them, that you can handle whatever they are feeling, and that you are there. This will help calm them more than anything. We feel safest when we are 'with'. Feel the feeling, breathe, and be with – and you don't need to do more than that. You might not be able to do this every time, and that's okay. Here's how that works. We will catch their

distress, as we are meant to. This gives us the opportunity to hold that distress with them, until those feelings start to soften. This can be a great thing when we have the emotional resources to do this, but we are human, and sometimes their fight or flight will raise fight or flight in us. We might get angry or frustrated (sharing their 'fight') or turn away and distract (sharing their 'flight'). Sometimes you'll be able to give them what they need, and sometimes you won't. Both are responses of loving, beautiful parents, but sometimes as parents we get stretched too far too.

Whenever you can, validate what they are feeling, but let your intentions be clear. This means steering away from neutral voices or neutral faces. It's hard to read the intentions behind a low-monotone, neutral voice or a neutral face. If your intention isn't clear, it can trigger a bigger sense of 'threat' in an already unhappy nervous system. Sometimes, we might think we're speaking calmly when we're actually speaking 'neutrally', or low, slow, and monotone. The point is our calm voice might not always be calming. Whenever you can, try to match the intensity of your child's feelings (through your voice tone, facial expressions, presence) while staying open, warm, and regulated. 'I can see how upset you are my darling. You really wanted [...] and you're so annoyed that it can't happen.'

What if they want space, or less words? If they get annoyed with too many words, just breathe and be with, 'I'm going to stay with you until you feel better.' You actually don't have to say anything at all if talking doesn't feel right. Just stay regulated and feel what they feel. They'll feel it in you that you get them. Similarly, if they want space, it's important to respect that, but stay in emotional proximity. 'Okay, I'm just going to stay over here until you feel better. I'll be right here for you.'

Your own state matters. An important part of co-regulation is making sure we are guiding that nervous system with tender, gentle hands and a steady heart. This is where our own self-regulation becomes important. Our nervous systems speak to each other every moment of every day. When our children are distressed, we will start to feel that distress. It becomes a loop. We feel what they feel, they feel what we feel. Our capacity to self-regulate is the circuit breaker. This can be so tough, but it can happen in microbreaks. A few strong steady breaths can calm our own nervous system, which we can then use to calm theirs. Breathe and be with. It's that simple, but so tough to do some days. But we have to be radically kind with ourselves too. It takes a steady heart to soothe the heart of another, and being that steady heart can be tough some days. Parenting is hard, and days will be hard, and on many of those days we'll feel the rawness and realness of it all. We'll say things we shouldn't say and do things we shouldn't do. We're human. Let's not put pressure on our children to be perfect by pretending that we are. Instead, let's repair the ruptures as soon as we can, and bathe them abundantly in love and the warmth of us. It's not about perfection, it's about consistency, and honesty, and the way we respond to them the most.

Cooking Together. One of the greatest benefits of cooking with children is that it can help them develop an **adventurous and varied taste palette**. Those who have been involved in the cooking process are generally keener to try new foods. In addition, you are teaching a basic skill that will be used for a lifetime. The benefits of healthy homecooked meals are endless.

HEALTHY
KIDS

HEALTH & SAFETY: Why Play is Important

Play is **central to your child's learning and development**. When your child plays, it gives them many different ways and times to learn. **Play also helps your child:** build confidence, feel loved, happy and safe, understand more about how the world works, develop social skills, language and communication, learn about caring for others and the environment, develop physical skills.

It's important for children to have plenty of different types of play experiences. This includes unstructured and structured play, indoor and outdoor play, solo and group play, craft and creative play, and so on. When children get variety, it's good for all aspects of their learning and development – physical, social, emotional and imaginative.

Different types of play: unstructured and structured

Unstructured, free play is unplanned play that just happens, depending on what takes your child's interest at the time. Unstructured, free play is particularly important for younger children because it lets them use their imagination and move at their own pace. **Examples of unstructured play might be:** creative play alone or with others, including artistic or musical games, imaginative games – for example, making cubbyhouses with boxes or blankets, dressing up or playing make-believe, exploring new or favourite spaces like cupboards, backyards, parks, playgrounds and so on.

You can be part of your child's unstructured play. But sometimes all you'll need to do is point your child in the right direction – towards the jumble of dress-ups and toys on their floor, or to the table with crayons and paper. At other times, you might need to be a bit more active. For example, 'How about we play dress-ups? What do you want to be today?'

Structured play is organised and happens at a fixed time or in a set space. It's often led by a grown-up. Older children are more likely to enjoy and benefit from structured play. **Examples of structured play include:** outdoor ball games like kicking a soccer ball, water familiarisation classes for toddlers or swimming lessons for older children, storytelling groups for toddlers and pre-schoolers at the local library, dance, music or drama classes for children of all ages, family board or card games, modified sports for slightly older children, like Cricket Blast, Aussie Hoops basketball, NetSetGO netball, Come and Try Rugby and Auskick football.

How play develops with children As your child grows, their attention span and physical skills develop and the way they play will change. Your child will get more creative and

experiment more with toys, games and ideas. This might mean they need more space and time to play. Also, children move through different forms of play as they grow. This includes playing alone, playing alongside other children and playing interactively with other children.

Toddlers: play ideas to encourage development

Here are some ideas your toddler might enjoy: Large and light things like cardboard boxes, buckets or blow-up balls can encourage your child to run, build, push or drag. Chalk, rope, music or containers can encourage jumping, kicking, stomping, stepping and running. Hoops, boxes, large rocks or pillows are good for climbing on, balancing, twisting, swaying or rolling. Dress-up games with scarves, hats and so on are good for imagination and creativity. Hills, tunnels or nooks can encourage physical activities like crawling, climbing and exploring. If you put on some favourite music while your toddler plays, they can also try out different sounds and rhythms. You might also like to sing, dance and clap along to music with your child.

Pre-schoolers: play ideas to encourage development

Here are some ideas to get your pre-schooler's mind and body going: Old milk containers, wooden spoons, empty pot plant containers, sticks, scrunched-up paper, plastic buckets, saucepans and old clothes are great for imaginative, unstructured play. Simple jigsaw puzzles and matching games like animal dominoes can improve your child's memory and concentration. Playdough and clay help your child develop fine motor skills. Favourite music or pots and pans are great for dancing or making music. Balls can encourage kicking, throwing or rolling. When you're encouraging your child to kick or throw, see whether you can get them to use one side of their body and then the other. School-age children: play ideas to encourage development

Your school-age child can have fun with the following objects and activities:

Furniture, linen, washing baskets, tents and boxes are great for building cubbyhouses. Home-made obstacle courses can get your child moving in different ways, directions and speeds. Games like 'I spy' are great for word play. They also develop literacy skills. Simple cooking and food preparation activities are great for developing science, numeracy, literacy and everyday skills. Your child's own imagination can turn your child into a favourite superhero or story character. If your child is interested, you could think about getting them into some sports or team activities for school-age children. Other possibilities include after-school or holiday art and craft activities.



KEEP YOUR SOIL HAPPY

The benefits of composting are endless. You can improve the structure, water retention and drainage of the soil in your garden, as well as increasing the retention of nutrients, resulting in happy and healthy plants. The best bit? Once you're all set up, your compost system will mostly look after itself.

Learning how to compost isn't difficult, Costsa Georgiadis ICAW ambassador has a very simple video explaining the steps to take to start composting at home. Find the video here <https://youtu.be/Uw5JVZSzMUA>

May 1-7 is International Compost Awareness week! ICAW aims to improve awareness of the importance of compost, a valuable organic resource. We can compost to help scrap carbon pollution by avoiding landfilling organic materials and helping to build healthier soils. *Better Soil, Better Life, Better Future.*

Enter the #CelebrateICAW Photo Competition 2022 by sharing how you have supported Compost Week this year by sending a photo of your compost at home or at work to info@core.asn.au

