

## Young Children and Private Spaces

In our busy, noisy and crowded lives, it can be difficult to find space and time for quiet time alone. Yet, this is something that everyone needs, even children. Children often spend large amounts of time in group settings; school, organized sports, day care, stores-even home can be a busy, noisy and crowded place. In these settings, children are required to wait, share, be more cooperative, interact with many people. Constant social interaction can create stress in children which can lead to inappropriate behaviour or conflict. Some children seem to have little need for quiet time, while others have a greater need. These differences in temperament are neither right nor wrong. Never label a child as shy, timid or a loner. And the more outgoing children may not be aware that they are overstimulated or becoming frustrated until a 'meltdown' takes place. Everyone can benefit from a quiet pause in the day. Following are some suggestions for providing quiet, private spaces for children.

Provide earphones, taped stories, and music

Make sure there is a place-a cupboard, closet, or drawer where your child can keep his own things and special possessions.

Try to make nap or rest time in the same quiet and restful room each day-not a quick nap in the car or on a couch. Favorite blankets or stuffed animals help make this a pleasant break in the day.

Have books accessible in a quiet corner with cushions or quilts to make a 'nest'. You might want to keep some special books put away and bring them out to encourage interest. You can also keep photo albums in this area-children really enjoy looking at the pictures.

Never use the quiet corner or area as a time out place or discipline technique.

Puzzles, a special pop-up book, markers and large paper, can be placed at a small table or area that is out of the way of activities. You can make a surprise box, and fill it with small toys, beads, cards etc and offer this to your child at certain times to encourage quiet, individual activity.

Have a no-interruption rule in your family for certain situations. In the same way that an adult may need to be at the computer or desk, to complete certain tasks, allow a child to choose to be alone and uninterrupted. A child who is involved in a book or activity, should not have always have to share. Give young children a few warnings if you do have to end his quiet play time. For example, say, " We have to go shopping in 10 minutes", And then later say, "we have to leave soon, ". You may need to promise that no one will touch the things the child has been playing with while you are gone.

Create a play tent or fort from large pillows and blankets. This will encourage imaginary games and also act as a sanctuary from noise and people.

Turn off the TV. Constant background sound can be stressful for many people. Do not have a TV in your child's bedroom. And the TV doesn't work as a tool for quiet times. TV is noisy, stimulating, and difficult to monitor for inappropriate content. It has been shown to interfere with sleep patterns in children. The

Canadian Pediatric Society and The American Academy of Pediatrics recommend no more than 1-2 hours of TV each day for children. (And the AAP recommends no TV at all for children under 2 years).

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