

First Time Visit



Thank you for visiting us! Here are a few things to know or get started with:

- Your child will be given a brief orientation of the Playground. You are welcomed to be part of this.
- A waiver form is required. Please fill out the attached. It's simple and all children can be listed on one line. When you are done please place it in the top basket behind the clock on the counter.

TODAY'S GUIDE

- (DURING THE PANDEMIC PARENTS CANNOT STAY BEYOND A FEW MINUTES). Part of the adventure play concept is minimal or no "adultization". We do want you to be comfortable with the staff and who we are, and we understand the desire to be present if this is your first trip. However, one of the primary purposes of an adventure playground is play without parents. We suggest:
 - Use the time to shop or have some special time by yourself (you deserve it!) or with a significant other or younger child. PERMANENT REGISTRATION REQUIRED TO LEAVE.
 - If you do stay, please step back. Be aware that your presence also effects other children. We rather you be absent but you can stay the front Parent Area.
 - This is a "life" facility where children are allowed to make mistakes. Research shows that children learn better from this method, please allow it to happen.
 - We ask that adults not participate with their child or build with your child. We encourage you to instead be on your phone. We've seen some smart moms tell their children that they are not allowed to help in this facility. Staff's instructions to children are that if you need adult help, you should not be doing it.
 - Adventure playgrounds have huge effects on the social, physical and educational makeup of a child. However, these effects occur over a period of time. Be aware that many youths need time to overcome their inhibitions. All youth love this facility at first, but then it's common to get bored. It's important that youth continue to interact in this type of environment to personally learn how to overcome their boredom and to be able to reach out to other youth socially (not to mention needing time to break the electronic addiction). Once this happens all those great social, physical and educational components of adventure play will shine.
- If you plan on having your child back with us, we would like you to permanently register. It is a simple form. Its main intent is as an Emergency Contact form.
 - Once permanently registered you (or your child) would sign in on the clipboard (usually located on the counter). Sign-out would be on what you choose as an exit for your child (i.e. parent pick-up only or allowed to walk home).
- Are we safe. The short answer is "yes". On the reverse side is documentation of this subject.
- Please make sure your child is appropriately dressed.
 - Wear play shoes, particularly ones that can get muddy, but not be so heavy that they will want to take them off. Staff will encourage shoes be on, but we cannot demand it. The best safety is for you to insist upon it (staff has been told endlessly that shoes are off because a parent told them not to get them muddy).
 - Paints are in use here and your child will get it on themselves. We often use common house latex paint. It will stain clothes (rubbing alcohol may be able to get it out if your determined).
- Younger Children/Maturity. This facility is designed for children ages 6-15. Again, a main function of adventure play is to be absent of parents, and this facility is not designed for the safety of younger children without a parent present. At present we are not kicking out younger children, but please do limit their being here. The bigger question is that of maturity. Although staff is present and monitoring we are not directly involved with the children or keeping track of them. The following is expected:
 - Follow staff instructions when given.
 - Never leave the facility.
 - Understand and respect the dangers (i.e. hot glue gun is hot).
 - Able to socially interact with other children.
- Complete rules and guidelines of the facility are available on the counter or website.
- Staffing. All staff are Fairytale Town employees and have been fingerprinted. At least one staff member will be scheduled inside and one outside for general monitoring.
- Food/Drink. A water faucet is available and there is fresh water to refill water bottles (please no disposable water bottles). Food drink is allowed, but we do ask for healthy meals/snacks. Sack lunches are stored in the staff area. A refrigerator is available. No heating, including the use of the microwave, is available.

Are We Safe?

It may seem at odds, in an environment where we put out real tools and actually encourage kids to take risks, but adventure playgrounds are safer than your traditional American playground. Studies have shown that the accident rate of adventure playgrounds is the same as traditional playgrounds. However, when you take into account that adventure playgrounds are staffed, and we report all injuries, including minor ones, adventure play facilities are actually safer – yes **safer** than your traditional park playground.

United States insurance companies recognize this, consider the risk minimal and require no additional liability coverage.

Why? Adventure Playgrounds are numerous in Europe and have been heavily studied. The realities are that when children are left to their own accord they will be more cautious and socially cooperative, even with certain risks being allowed. In fact, it has even been shown that the more the controlled setting, the stronger the chance of injury. We allow “risk”, but that risk is determined by the youth. To one child climbing to the top of a tree may be a risk, whereas for another climbing to the second rung of a ladder is a risk. One of the primary keys is that the youth are not being directed or pushed to do anything specific, they do not get bored and they stay within their own personal safety realm.

At the Sacramento Adventure Playground we see all the research payout. Manager Steve Caudle had this to say: “This environment is amazing. In an atmosphere where we provide little to no direction to the participants you can clearly see the youth acting in a manner much greater than their age. In your more traditional, and controlled programs, getting into trouble happens, and often leads to injuries. We simply do not see that here.”

Public swimming pools are the norm and an accepted play facility in the United States. Although there are tragic deaths, public pools are generally considered safe. Accidents can happen at an adventure play facility, but no one is going to drown. Its unfamiliarity is what cautions some parents. As parents become familiar with adventure play it becomes more acceptable.

Another aspect that needs to be mentioned is that taking risks prepare children for later in life. Numerous studies have shown that when children are “bubble wrapped” they become ill prepared for more extreme and dangerous parts of life later on, both in a physical and mental aspect. Caudle offered “I’d rather have my child take their first risk with a hand saw, than a 2-ton car later in life.” The Playground has had numerous children cheerfully note that they are being trusted to be away from their parent, and vice-versa, we’ve had parents mention the growth in themselves in allowing their child time away from them.

For a deeper understanding we recommend the short book, *Adventure, The Value of Risk in Children’s Play*, by Joan Almon (Alliance for Childhood, 2013).

Interesting Research on “Free Play”

Stuart Brown MD, in his introductory to his book Play (2009, Penguin Books Ltd) wrote about the life of the famed musical choreographer, Gillian Lynn (Cats and Phantom of the Opera) who as a child was labeled as being mentally disabled (ADHD now). Her mom took her to a specialist who after interviewing her and her daughter took the mom into the hallway while putting on some music in the office. In observation, Gillian began dancing to the music. “Mrs. Lynne,” said the doctor, “your daughter’s not sick, she’s a dancer”. Originally written by Sir Ken Robinson who wrote “Here is a woman who has helped put together some of the most successful musical productions in history, have given pleasure to millions, and is a multimillionaire,” Robinson says. Of course if she were a child now, he adds, “someone would probably put her on drugs and tell her to calm down.”

Brown MD, also wrote about how Cal Tech’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) had a very difficult time finding replacements for its large retiring force of employees. They hired the very best from the best schools, but overall, their ability to perform declined as a company. In their research, they determined that the younger workers were very adept at the academic portion, but limited in their ability to problem solve. They discovered that their older work force grew up problem solving by playing (taking apart radios as youth, etc.). They have since changed their interview formula to include this type of playing.

Working in 1968, Sara Smilansky studied children at play in Israel and USA. Through her work, she came to the conclusion that what she termed culturally disadvantaged children did not know how to play imaginatively and that this was a serious hindrance to their ability to read and write. Taken from The Value of Play by Perry Else. pp 146. Continuum International Publishing Group. 2009.

In Symbolic Play children may make substitutes for the real things (i.e. a rock representing an animal) it “allows children to play with and explore things in their world without losing control – playing with real animals might be too challenging or frightening. Similarly making daisy chains as necklaces or bottle tops into coins helps the child play with ‘precious’ objects that might be out of reach in their day-to-day world.” The Value of Play by Perry Else. pp 95. Continuum International Publishing Group. 2009.

“Jack Panksepp, has shown that active play selectively stimulates brain-derived neurotrophic factor (which stimulates nerve growth) in the amygdala (where emotions get processed) and the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (where executive decisions are processed)....Byers speculates that during play, the brain is making sense of itself through simulation testing. Play activity is actually helping sculpt the brain. Play, Stuart Brown MD (2009, Penguin Books Ltd). Pp. 33-34.