**Parent messages with references.**

**Provide your child with free time. Children need plenty of free time to discover and explore.  Don't  jam pack your schedule with errands and activities. Give your child time for free play, day dreaming and roaming around in the back yard.**

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/19/magazine/breathing-in-vs-spacing-out.html?_r=1>

**The average American boy or girl spends as few as 30 minutes in unstructured outdoor play each day, and more than seven hours each day in front of an electronic screen. Yikes! Let’s not let that continue.**

**Schools with environmental education programs score higher on standardized tests in math, reading, writing and listening.**11

**Children’s stress levels fall within minutes of seeing green spaces. Whenevermy toddler  daughter was fretful, taking her outside always calmed her down. ( or some other personal experience)**

**Children are naturally drawn to active play outdoors: it allows them to explore their environment, develop muscle strength and coordination, and gain self-confidence**. - See more at:<http://www.fisher-price.com/en_US/playtime/parenting/articlesandadvice/articledetail.html?article=tcm:169-20482#sthash.SK0jeDaQ.dpuf>

A factsheet about the benefits of being outdoors from the National Wildlife Federation

<http://www.nwf.org/pdf/Be%20Out%20There/MindBodySpirit_FactSheet_May2010.pdf>

**In the last twenty years, childhood obesity rates have more than doubled; the United States has become the largest consumer of ADHD medications in the world; and the use of antidepressants in pediatric patients has risen sharply. American kids are out of shape, tuned out and stressed out because they’re missing something essential to their health and development: unstructured outdoor play**.

From<http://www.nwf.org/Be-Out-There/Why-Be-Out-There/Whole-Child.aspx>

Some great ideas for whole body play:<http://mamaot.com/2012/10/02/tips-for-bringing-big-body-play-into-your-childs-everyday/>

**Big body play is a treasure-trove of learning experiences in and of itself.**

**In big body play, children learn to…**

* **control their bodies, their senses, and their feelings;**
* **cooperate with peers, and take responsibility for themselves;**
* **recover from physical (and emotional) bumps and scrapes; and**
* **stretch their brains by taking risks and trying new things.**

<http://naturalearning.org/sites/default/files/Benefits%20of%20Connecting%20Children%20with%20Nature_InfoSheet.pdf>

**Nature is important to children’s development in every major way—intellectually, emotionally, socially, spiritually and physically**

**Children who grow their own food are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables (Bell & Dyment, 2008) and to show higher levels of knowledge about nutrition.**

**In a nationwide telephone survey of 2,004 respondents, people who reported picking vegetables, taking care of plants, or living next to a garden in childhood were more likely to continue gardening as they aged and to form lasting positive relationships with gardens and trees**

<http://www.childrenandnature.org/downloads/CYEfactsheet3gardening2009.pdf>

**Teaching children to garden benefits them directly -- kids are more likely to try fruits and vegetables that they grow as well as providing physical activity.**