

# Proper playthings vital for child development

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To a young child, the most intriguing design is the human face.

And human interaction is something you cannot yet buy in a store.

Mira Bakhle, parenting specialist for the Southfield Child Development Center, made these points last Thursday. She spoke to concerned mothers about toy selection for young children.

Ms. Bakhle, a native of Bombay, India came to this area in 1960 to study at the Merrill Palmer Institute. She completed studies at Wayne State University, has taught there and is also in private practice in Southfield.

She has been associated with Southfield schools for 10 years. "A little child doesn't need an electric train, he needs you," she told the mothers.

"The best toy in your child's life is you — helping, sharing and playing. That gives the toys meaning."

Ms. Bakhle said in our culture the value of play takes a secondary role whereas play is the primary activity of a human being.

"We are an uptight nation. We make beautiful machines and imperfect human beings," she said.

SHE CONTENDS the person buying a toy for a young child must know that child's development level.

"In our desire to raise bright children, often we want to shower them

with complicated things and this can be frustrating to the child," she said.

"It's not necessary to spend a lot on cutesy toys. Just give the children your wooden spoon, your pot or pan. And if you buy toys, buy toys that promote interaction."

Ms. Bakhle also pointed out that our culture puts too much stress on getting a child ready for the next stage of development.

"Growth comes from within," she said. "There should be more focus on unique moments."

"Just because a child is 4-years-old doesn't mean he'll enjoy playing with a 16-piece puzzle. Each child is unique and a mish-mash of developmental stages."

The proper playthings are vital to a young child who is growing and learning from the environment in a way never to be repeated, she said.

Mrs. Bakhle made the point that play is the child's means of discovery, of communication and expression. Sand, trees, rocks, grass animals and plants provide endless opportunities for exploration and creativity. Basic needs are satisfied in digging, balancing, climbing and building.

According to Mrs. Bakhle certain qualities are necessary for toys to enhance this kind of growth.

"A young child's playthings should be as free of detail as possible. A child needs freedom to express himself by creating his own childlike world. To much detail hampers him.

• Playthings should be versatile. The play of a young child is not highly specialized. The richer the range of play possibilities in a toy, therefore, the more interesting to him. Trucks which can be used for loading and transporting many different materials or for carrying passengers have great play value. Much more than highly-detailed model passenger cars which call for the same kind of play over and over again.

• Good playthings should stimulate children to do things for themselves. Equipment which makes a child a spectator, such as a mechanical duck which performs after winding, or a dog that turns somersaults, entertain for the moment but have little or no play value. Those play materials which give the child only a passive role are not tools of play, but objects of diversion.

• Young children need large, easily manipulated playthings. Toys too small can be a source of frustration because the child's muscular coordination is not yet developed enough to handle the smaller forms and shapes. A child's muscles develop through his play.

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