



## Let's Go Outside! Outside Time is NOT Wasted Time!

Shared with you by Lisa Murphy, M.Ed.

### A SMATTERING OF WALKABOUT QUESTIONS

Where did you play when you were little?  
Who designed it?  
Could you go back there today?  
Who were you with?  
What did you do?  
Where were the adults?  
How long do your kids get to play outside?  
What would happen if you stayed outside all day?



**SOUNDBITE:** Being outside is more than just having a safe structure.  
– *Mary Rivkin*

The outdoor environments our children are playing in are, for the most part, greatly altered from the ones we experienced. HOW?

- Planned
- Scheduled
- Safe
- Organized

### 8 REASONS WHY CHILDREN NEED TO BE OUTSIDE:

1. You cannot EXPERIENCE the outdoors when you are inside! You have to *be* out to experience nature and the natural world.
2. It is where you cultivate & learn environmental values and awareness.
3. It is where we came from.
4. Children are physical, multi-sensory beings.
5. Are they hyper? Or Inactive?
6. Current obesity “crisis” (September is childhood obesity awareness month)  
18% of 4 yr olds are obese. This is about 1 in 5. April 2009 *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*.
7. There is freedom in outdoor play.
8. Connections with the community

## 6 REASONS WHY THEY AREN'T:

1. There's no place to go
2. Traffic concerns
3. Being in cars limits opportunities for socialization
4. More people and less space
5. "Screen Seduction"
6. School Pressure (NCLB, high stakes testing, etc) and "too full" schedules

### SOME MORE SOUNDBITES:

Even prisoners get outside time – *Lisa Murphy*  
TV is junk disguised as a way of life – *Ferenc Mate*  
High stakes are for tomatoes – *Alfie Kohn*  
Being outdoors is Mother Nature's Ritalin – *Richard Low*

### Language that supports outdoor play and investigation:

When children are MOVING they are activating their VESTIBULAR SYSTEM, which in turn stimulates the BRAIN (specifically the RAS – Reticular Activating System) and gets it ready for LEARNING SOMETHING NEW! Everything is on alert and the brain says: "Let's Go!"

**Breakdown:** The Vestibular System (controlling movement and balance) is the first sensorial system to develop (in utero). The Vestibular System is greatly influenced by the inner ear and the position of the head. The RAS (Reticular Activating System) is a nerve system located in the brain stem that, in essence, wakes up the neocortex. It says "Wake up! Something's coming in!" Now, Proprioception is the body's sense of itself in space. Proprioceptive Receptors (located in all your muscles) allow us to move, explore our environment and maintain our balance. The Proprioceptive System and the RAS are linked to the Vestibular System. When we do not move and activate the Vestibular System we are NOT taking in information from the environment. Meaning – we will not be ready to learn! *For more on this you MUST read Smart Moves by Carla Hannaford.*

So, when you are playing on the swings, hanging upside down, spinning, walking backwards, skipping, jumping rope, doing somersaults, cartwheels, spinning the swings, flying on a tire swing, jumping off a rock, you are not “just playing outside” you are ***activating the vestibular system!***

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So here’s a little something to think about: With all of this in mind, could what *appears* to be ADD/ADHD really be an inactivated Vestibular System? Which in turn could be strengthened via movement activities, large motor games and programs like “Brain Gym?” Once again “proving” that if children received more playground time, PE and Gym they would not need the RITALIN??!!

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An outdoor environment needs to be an EXTENSION of your indoor one. Everything that is IN should, could be OUT as well! **Other cautions:** Watch out for “chickens on a fence” syndrome as well as “I’m cold, we’re going in” syndrome. The adults must be prepared for outside time! Engaging with children and facilitating their investigations is different than *entertaining* them. Go for the former and beware of the latter.

According to May 2005 edition of NAEYC’s *Young Children*, 16,000 schools in the United States, in the name of “higher standards” and “getting them ready,” have eliminated recess.

*How do we make sure your school is not next?*

### **What do we do about it?**

- The obvious: Bring them out!
- Investigate your control issues (clothes, wet, cleanliness, dirty, we *could be doing* something else...)
- Provide free time. Remember that 15 minutes is not enough!
- Be prepared when you go out! Control the \_\_\_\_\_!!
- Education of self, families, administration, parents, media, friends, public!
- Become an advocate of Loose Parts! A few examples: blocks, foam pieces, tires, sand, water, boards, blankets, sheets, boxes, buckets, funnels, scoops, old kitchen tools, sticks, leaves, rocks, flowers, pinecones, pods, berries & crates.
- Practice and know how to communicate what you know! Use the “right” words
- Common sense is different than living in a place of fear, worry and litigation!

## **THINGS TO HAVE ON THE YARD:**

- Bikes
- Scooters
- Riding toys
- Swings
- Slides
- Wagons
- Ramps
- Tunnels
- Items to climb on
- Things to go through
- Loose parts to drag around
  - Tubing
  - Plastic gutter
  - Milk crates
  - Cable spools
  - Tires
  - Cones
- Balls
- Easel & Art materials
- Sound wall
  - Hubcaps
  - Washboards
  - 5-gal water jug
  - Wooden spoons
- Wood working stuff
- Playhouse
- Sensory tubs
- Tin cans and water for “painting”  
the school (with water)
- Roller paint brushes with long handles also for “painting” (with water) on the cement and the walls of the school
- Sidewalk chalk
- Dirt for digging
- Sandbox filled with sand
- Dirt/Sandbox tools:
  - Shovels & Scoops
  - Funnels & Buckets
  - Plastic gutter
- Access to water, hose, buckets, jugs, etc.
- Milk crates
- Hammocks
- Sheets and blankets
- Parachute
- Hula hoops
- Obstacle course materials (think: up, down, over, under, through)
- Beanbag toss games
- Garden and gardening tools and equipment
- Tools for exploring: butterfly nets, goggles, bug jars, magnifying glasses, etc.
- Hose phones
- Blocks
- Dress up materials

## Suggested Resources:

- *A Reasonable Life*, Ferenc Mate, Albatross Publications, © 1993.
- *Brain Gym – Teachers Edition*, Paul and Gail Dennison, Edu-Kinesthetics Inc, © 1989
- *Let's Play Outdoors!* Katherine Read Baker, NAEYC © 1966.
- *Mud, Sand and Water*, Dorothy Hill, NAEYC © 1977.
- *Smart Moves: Why Learning is not all in your head*, Carla Hannaford, Great Ocean Pubs. © 1995.
- *The Geography of Childhood: Why children need wild places*, Gary Paul Nabham & Stephen Trimble, Beacon Press, © 1994.
- *The Great Outdoors: Restoring a Child's Right to Play Outside*, Mary Rivkin, NAEYC © 1995.
- *The Last Child in the Woods: Saving our children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, Richard Louv, © 2005
- *The Myth of the A.D.D. Child*, Plume Penguin Books, Thomas Armstrong, © 1995.
- *What to say when the wolves come knockin'*, in press, Lisa Murphy, Ooey Gooley Inc. © 2010
- *The Developmental Benefits of Playgrounds*, A resource book published by ACEI © 2004.

Brain Gym [www.braingym.com](http://www.braingym.com)

S'cool Moves [www.schoolmoves.com](http://www.schoolmoves.com)

<http://www.acei.org/devbenefitsplaygrounds.htm>

International Play Association website <http://www.ipausa.org/index.html>



## STALKERS WELCOME! How to connect with Lisa:

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*I take pics of all the crazy carpets I see in hotels! It’s a total brainless way for me to decompress.*

**Spicy Slides Blog:** <http://www.tumblr.com/blog/spicyslides>

*I take pics of spicy slides and other old metal playground equipment I come across while travelling.*

**YouTube Channel:** OoeyGooleyLady

*Video clips, soundbites, favorite stories: great for when you need a BOOSTER shot of inspiration!*

**eBooks:** All of Lisa’s books are now available on your favorite eBook platforms.

**Questions? Call REDLEAF PRESS (800) 423-8309**

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