

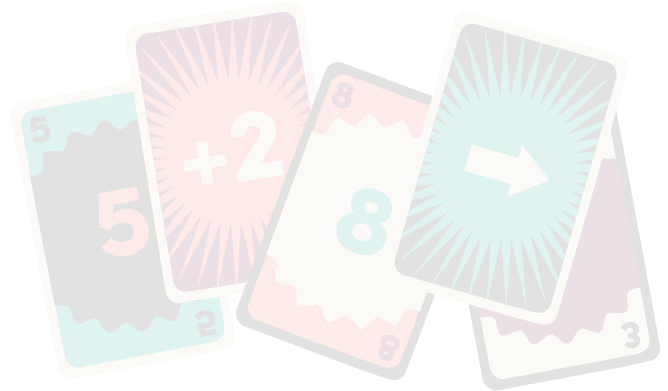
# HOW DO YOU PLAY WITH YOUR KIDS when you don't know how to play?

From licensed therapist  
Roya Dedeaux, LMFT #95302

## 1. Get rid of the negative voices that say you shouldn't play

Why? For generations we have been given messaging that says "idle hands are the devil's playthings" and other sayings that villainize play. In actuality, play is one of the single most beneficial things you and your kids can do - even as an adult. Shush those past voices, those negative messages. They have no place in your home.

**How:** Write down negative beliefs about play, crumple them in a ball, and play basketball right into the trash!



## 2. Let your kid be the expert!

Why? Adults sometimes think they have to have all the answers in order to do it "right." When you're attempting to play with your kid, let THEM be the expert! Let them bask in the self-esteem boost that is expertise and teaching someone they love about something they love.

**How:** Ask them what game they'd recommend for a beginner, ask about their preferences, how they learned what they know, what the biggest challenge of their play has been...

Roya is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist with a focus on parenting and play. Her first book, *Connect with Courage: practical ways to work through fear and find joy in the places your kids take you*, is now available at all major book retailers.

Her speaking, writing, and clinical focus is on the importance of supporting kids' interests and using play with purpose to improve relationships, learning, mental health, and overall well-being.

She also loves to play with her wonderful children, husband, and animals where they live and homeschool in Southern California.



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### 3. Bring on the nostalgia!

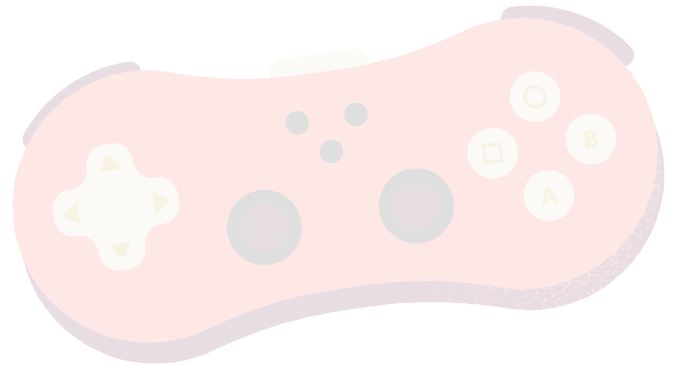
Why? Tap back into your inner child and share some of the joy with your kids! It's a great way to lose some of our adult inhibitions and to connect with your kids!

How: Find some classic games from your childhood and play with your kids!

### 4. Drop perfection

Why? Your kids don't care if you play it exactly right. They won't remember that you couldn't do a perfect funny voice, kick the ball right, or that you get last in Mario Kart every time. They just want time spent playing with you.

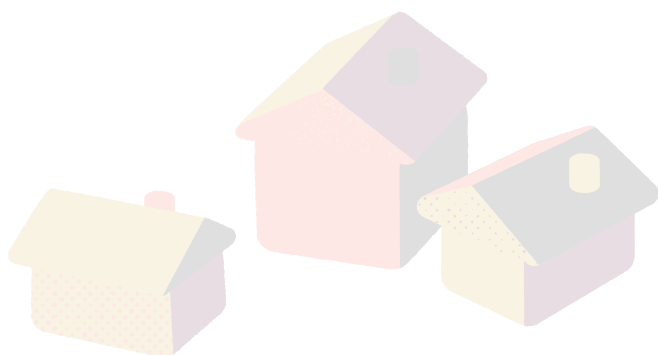
How? Sorry friend, no special tactic. Sometimes you just gotta do it. Remember it's not about you.



### 5. Don't make it a lesson

Why? It's not fun to hang out with someone who tries to \*teach you a lesson\* every chance they get. Relax. There will be other moments to impart that wisdom. For now, just enjoy the play. It doesn't need to be deeper than that - it's already meaningful.

How? Look at the details of your kiddo - their eyelashes, the corner of their mouth when they grin, how their eyes sparkle. Let noticing those details buy you time til the urge to teach passes.



### 6. Set a timer

Why? It can be hard for adults to play in an open-ended way for an unlimited amount of time. It can make us antsy and gets in the way of being present. Setting a timer can also help your kid know what they can count on from you,

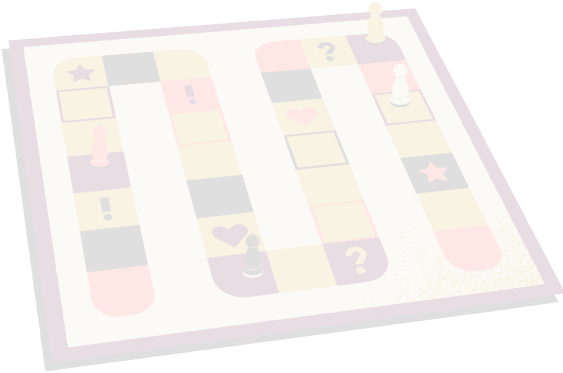
How: Set a timer for the time you have free to play, and then honor it. Don't do other things during that time. Commit! You can get a lot of solid play connection even in just a few minutes!



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## 7. Be curious above all

Why? Curiosity is the antidote to judgement! Be curious about why your kid enjoys their game, their interests, and the choices they make when they play. Be curious about how they learned the skills they employ, what makes them light up!

How? Ask questions like, "how did you learn to do that?" "What's your favorite thing about that game?" "What was it like when you first started?" "What's your next goal in the game?"

## 8. Be genuine - you don't need to fake happiness to play

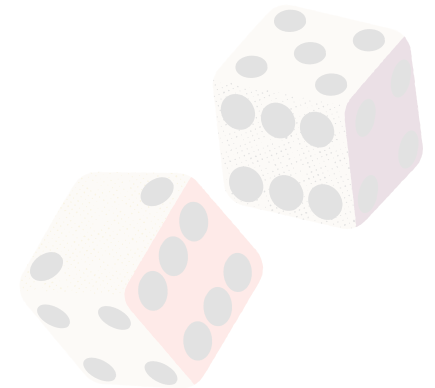
Why? Sometimes it's hard to play because there is heavy stuff happening in your adult world. Good news - you don't need to fake happiness to play. Play can be a point of comfort and security even in sadness & fear.

How? Say things like, "I'm feeling sad today and would love to spend time with you. Let's play a game together." "I'm angry today! Want to make mad monsters out of playdough with me?" "I feel helpless and out of control. It'd be nice to hold controls in my hands til I figure this out. Let's choose a video game."

## 9. Do it anyway - you have professional permission

Why? You have my professional therapist permission to play, play and more play. Play is vital for brain development, physical development, and emotional development. It creates connections between parents and kids that lead to success & safety. It provides the vehicle for self-esteem, teamwork, leadership, and conflict resolution. Play equals learning.

How? Start with whatever your kids are already interested in. If they love to make slime, make slime. If they are all about make-believe, it's time to break out the dress ups. If they could spend all day playing video games - then that is where you start.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roya".



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INSPIRATION, & HELP WITH  
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led by licensed therapist Roya Dedeaux

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