



www.letthechildrenplay.net/2011/08/10-reasons-why-we-should-let-children.html

1. Playing in the mud can make you happier.

Scientists have discovered something that children have always known - playing in the mud can lift your mood. Recent **studies** have revealed that dirt contains microscopic bacteria called *Mycobacterium vaccae* which increases the levels of serotonin in our brains, helping to relax, soothe and calm.

2. Playing in the mud connects you with nature.

If you never know something, it's hard to care about it. Many kids these days never know the outdoors beyond the school playground or their own backyards, if they even have one. Getting kids outside to play (as a place to act out make believe worlds and explore) creates happy memories with the one most primal element in our world: nature.

3. Playing in the mud can make you healthier.

Step away from the antibacterial hand wipes. **Research** has shown that playing in the dirt - including very wet dirt - is good for a child's immune system.

"So let your child be a child. Dirt is good. If your child isn't coming in dirty every day, they're not doing their job. They're not building their immunological army. So it's terribly important." - Mary Ruebush is the author of **Why Dirt Is Good: 5 Ways to Make Germs Your Friends**

4. Playing in the mud can make you smarter.

Throw away the flash cards and send your child outside to play instead. Studies have found that playing in the dirt can make you smarter. The same release of serotonin that occurs when playing in *M. vaccae* dirt has also been shown to improve cognitive function.

5. Playing in the mud helps children to learn and develop.

Sensory, hands-on play feeds children's brains. Listing all the ways playing with mud - a delightfully sensory experience - can help children to learn and develop would be a whole post in itself. So I'm going to send you **here** for a thorough look at the value of sensory play. (if you go online this is a live link)

6. Playing in the mud helps develop positive dispositions.

Having an area outdoors set aside for mud play - a mud patch or a mud pie kitchen for example - provides a space for children to retreat to for some time alone in a soothing sensory experience or to play with peers co-operating, communicating, negotiating and sharing.

7. Mud is a wonderful art medium.

Mud can be moulded and decorated and it responds differently than sand, clay or playdough. For ideas hop on over to **The Art of Mud** from Artful Adventures.

8. Mud play welcomes all comers.

Mud is an open ended material that meets the different needs and interests of different children. A younger child might be right into the sensory experience while older preschoolers are busy making their own mud bricks. With mud, there is something for everyone.

9. Playing in the mud encourages creative thinking.

Playing with open-ended materials like mud stimulate creativity and imagination - things that are hard to jump start later in life.

10. Childhood memories.

Think back to your own childhood. Do you have happy memories of playing outside in the mud and the dirt? After all, making mud pies is one of the iconic images of childhood. We are creating the experiences, the memories and the childhoods of today's children. What do we want them to remember?