

Letter From a Toddler

Dear Caregiver,

You looked a little tired and discouraged when the parents were coming to pick all of us up today. Then, when that one dad said, "Did they learn anything today or did they just play?" I thought you'd just about had it. I'm writing to cheer you up and tell you that I'm learning lots because you help us play.

Tonight at supper my big sister said that she learned "the nines table" in school today. I'm not sure what the "nines table" is but everyone seemed pleased and excited that she'd learned it.

I learned a lot today. Unfortunately, I can't talk enough to describe what I learned about how the world works. I know that dumping out bins of toys, climbing, knocking over blocks and squashing bananas on my feeding tray doesn't sound as mysterious as "the nines table" but I'm sure grateful that you know how important it all was.

Thank goodness you know I have to play to learn. For example, remember today how every time you'd kneel down and open up your arms, I'd run to you for a big hug? We were playing a game of course, and we'd both laugh – but just the act of running was learning for me. Babies and toddlers learn through their big muscles, you know. When I ran into your arms it not only made me feel loved and happy, it gave me a chance to practice the movements of using my arms and legs together. I'm brand new at that. Running strengthens those muscles too. It was fun. I wanted to do it over and over. I'm glad you had time to play so that I could learn. Thank you.

And I'm glad you noticed today how much fun I had tapping with the xylophone hammer, remember? I tapped the xylophone for a while, then the table, then the floor and lots of other objects. I discovered so many different sounds – metallic, strong, soft. Oh, by the way, sorry about Robby's head. It sure scared me when he cried so loud. Thanks for finding all those boxes and pans for me to tap. I am beginning to understand so much more about the world now because you realized I was learning, not "just playing".

I heard you say, "Tappers need things to tap!" You must believe that "dumpers need things to dump" too, because you filled up that coffee can with clothespins over and over and let me dump it out as much as I wanted to. You must have realized that I wasn't trying to make a mess

when I dumped out all the tubs of toys yesterday. I need to dump things out. I'm so curious about how something can be full one minute and empty the next and that I can make it happen. Dumping things out makes me feel big. After lots of play dumping, I'll want to try filling. It's really the very first step towards being able to put things away neatly - when I'm older.

Thanks to your helping me play, I'm learning that it's good to be curious, it's good to explore and learn and understand. I get the feeling you think my play is pretty valuable. My play is all my own idea you know. You must think that my ideas are pretty valuable, too. Hey, that must mean you value me, too. I'm important, and what I learn is important - even if it isn't "the nines table".

Please don't be discouraged. You helped me play today. You gave me gifts of learning and self-worth that nobody can ever take away. See you tomorrow!

A Toddler in Child Care