



Social and Emotional Development **Activity for 18 to 24 Months**

Early Symbolic Play

Symbolic play involves children learning to use toys or props to pretend they are doing adult things. This type of play helps children act out the thoughts and feelings they don't know how to put into words and helps prepare them to play with other children.

Materials:

- Toys or props that would let a child imitate adult activities (plastic dishes, spoons, tea set, comb and brush, dolls, stuffed animals, toy food, empty food containers, toy phones, toy broom)

What to do:

1. Join the child in play by imitating his actions as a way to join him at his level. If the child is stirring a spoon in a bowl, take another spoon and bowl and do the same.
2. Add an interesting "twist" after a minute or two and invite the child to join you. Pretend you are eating something good from the spoon and offer the child a "taste."
3. Encourage the child to let you pretend to taste the imaginary food on his spoon.
4. Keep the play going, if he is interested, by adding another step: Show the child how to feed the dolls or stuffed animals with a spoon, add a cup to pretend you are drinking, or show him how to clean the toy dishes with a cloth and put them away.
5. Talk about what you are doing and interpret the child's actions into words: "You're giving the baby some dinner. Baby is hungry."

