



Once Upon Some
Messy Fun

EmbraceTheMess

♥ Finding
AWE & WONDER
♥ in the Messy Magic of
EVERYDAY CHILDHOOD



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Play. Connection. Wonder. Growth.
All Feelings Matter.

Why Awe Matters in Development

- Awe builds curiosity, empathy, and creativity
- Wonder supports/strengthens emotional regulation
- Shared joyful moments strengthen relationships
- Develop resilience and stress tolerance
- Children naturally seek awe through play and discovery

Where Is The Awe?

Awe and Wonder are ALL AROUND US

- ✓ A toddler watching bubbles float away like they've witnessed actual sorcery
- ✓ A child finding a worm on the sidewalk
- ✓ Seeing a rainbow
- ✓ The absolute joy of stomping in a puddle (for kids AND adults)
- ✓ The quiet wonder of listening to rain against the window
- ✓ Seeing animals in nature – bunnies or deer in the yard, squirrels collecting and burying nuts, birds on a feeder, driving past a field of cows and mooooooing...



*Children are naturally wired
wired for awe.
Adults often have to relearn it.*

Sensory Play + Awe = Brain Building

Sensory play is more than “messy fun.”

It is how young children explore and understand the world.



Awe-filled sensory play experiences support:

- Sensory experiences organize the brain and body
- Nature, movement, storytelling, and messy play help children learn
- Language development / Communication skills
- Social-emotional learning / Self-regulation
- Problem-solving: “I wonder...” questions
- Curiosity turns everyday moments into meaningful experiences

Children learn through experiences that engage their senses, emotions, bodies, and relationships.

Big Feelings Need Wonder Too

Awe and wonder aren't only for happy moments.

Children can experience wonder:

- after grief
- during stress
- during hard transitions
- during anxiety

Tied to trauma-informed lens:

- Predictable rituals create safety.
- Shared sensory experiences build connection.
- Nature and play help children recover from stress.



Wonder reminds children that the world is still safe, beautiful, interesting, and connected... even during difficult seasons.

Practical “Awe-Seeking” Family Ideas



Children don't remember every toy
or gift.

They remember the time you spent with
them and how it felt to be with you.

Tiny Daily Awe Moments

- “Wonder” walks in nature
- Stargazing
- Bubble baths with glow sticks
- Family storytelling and game nights
- Dance parties in pajamas
- Cloud watching
- Sensory bins / Glitter bottles
- Cooking together or making slime
- Reading books dramatically (silly voices)
- “What surprised you today?” at bedtime
- Rain walks / splashing in puddles
- Collecting tiny treasures

These tiny moments may seem small, but developmentally they are HUGE!

All Behavior Is Communication

In social-emotional learning, sensory play, and child development, we talk a lot about regulation, behavior, attachment, and communication.

- Big feelings often show up as behavior
- Stress and overwhelm reduce curiosity and connection
- Play, movement, and sensory experiences help children reconnect
- Regulation grows through co-regulation and safe relationships

Awe connects to *all* of those things.

Awe slows us down.

Awe helps us feel safe enough to connect.

Awe/Wonder create moments where relationships grow

We wonder... TOGETHER



Connection Comes Before Correction

- Relationships shape development
- Children learn best through connection
- Wonder-filled moments create emotional safety
- Everyday rituals become powerful learning opportunities



The Importance of Slowing Childhood Down

You only get...

- 1 first birthday
- 20 chances to play tooth fairy
- 1 first date
- 1 high school graduation
- 10 times to play Santa (maybe)
- 18 summers
- 1 or 2 proms

The days are long, but the years are short.

Treasure the wonder-filled moments

The wonder-filled moments:

- ARE the learning
- ARE the regulation
- ARE the relationship-building
- ARE the memories

Food for thought:

Maybe awe doesn't require us to create extraordinary childhoods. Maybe it simply asks to notice the extraordinary parts of ordinary moments.



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