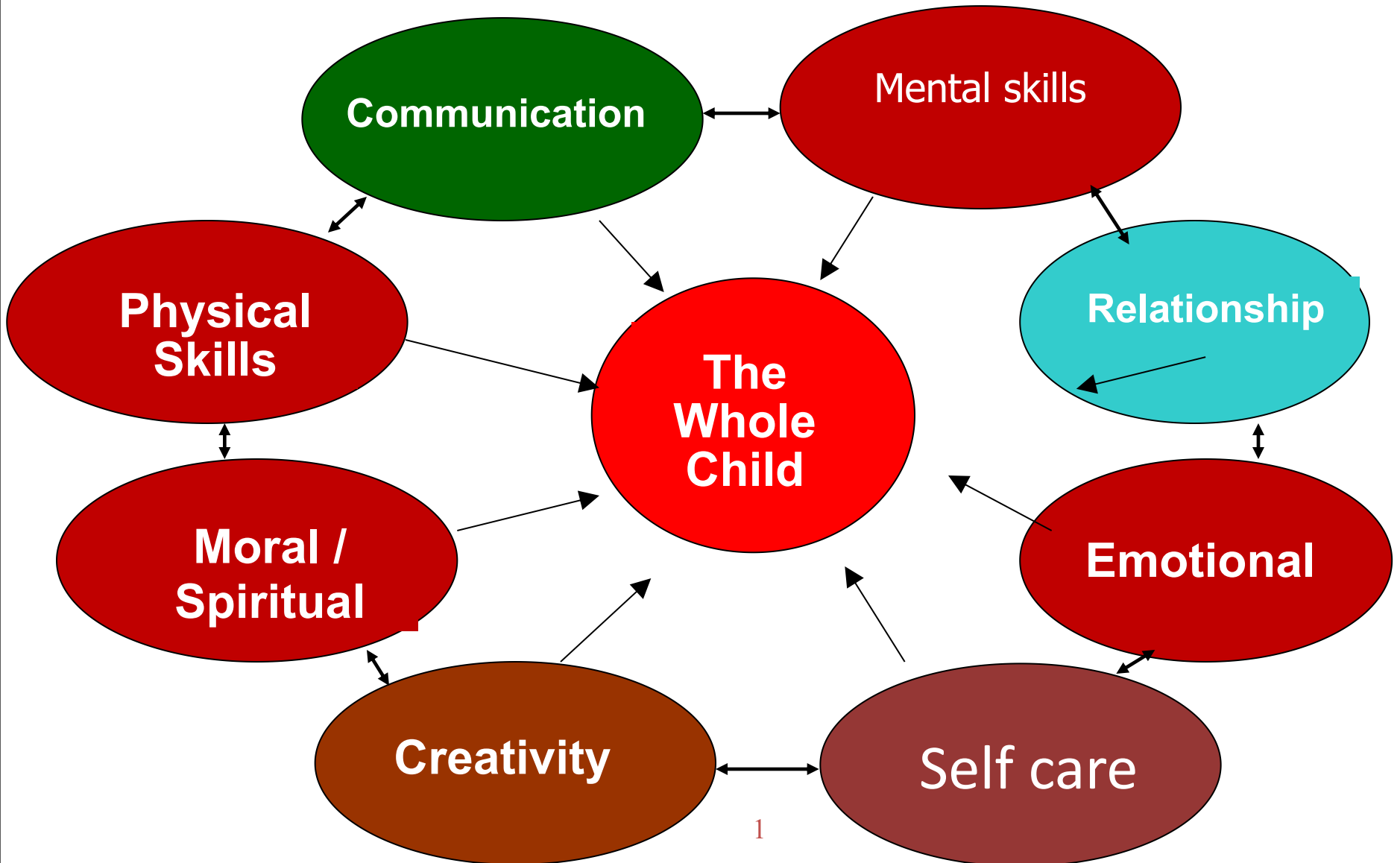


The Holistic Child



***"We do not stop playing
because we grow old; we
grow old because we stop
playing."***

George Bernard Shaw

Importance of Play

Play is considered so important to a child's development that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) has established it as **every child's right**.

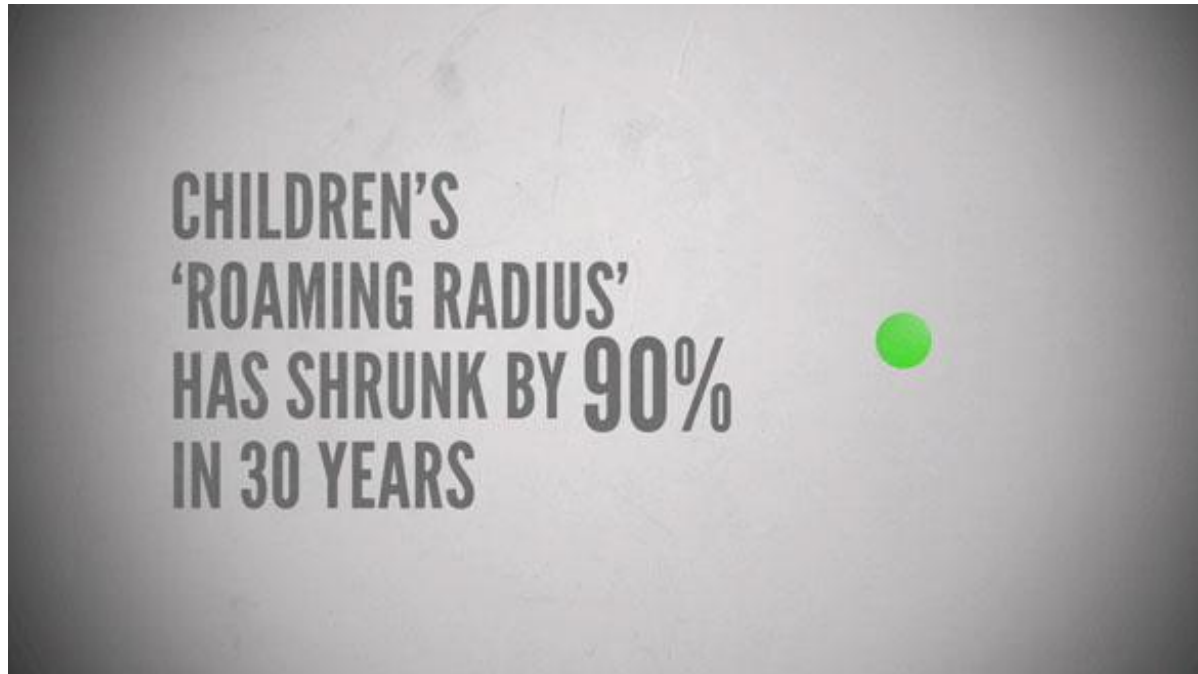


It states that:

“ Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities.”

A report from Natural England (2009) found that fewer than 10% of children play in wild places, compared with 40% a generation ago. The distance children roam away from home has shrunk by 90% in 30 years. Children don't play outside nearly as much as they once did.



At the same time, studies show that child wellbeing in the developed world has been rapidly decreasing over the last ten years. According to the Office of National Statistics, one in 10 children in the UK, aged between five and 16, has a clinically diagnosed mental health disorder.

Why Play?



Play is the time when we feel most **alive** and is a necessity to all!

It is the **child's way of making sense of the world** – a learning tool that engages, motivates, challenges and pleases.

It connects us to each other and the world around us – relationships.

Learning is more effective and productive when playing.

- **Children have an innate drive to learn** – Children want to be seen as smart, intelligent and capable people who can do things, who know things and who are well connected with family and friends.
- **The power of play for brain development.** The brain grows fastest in the first 5 years of life and brain research confirms that play enables the wiring of the brain to make multiple and complicated neuron connections that in many ways decide our future ability to learn, achieve and be happy.
- **Play** helps the brain to make these **connections** because it allows free reign to the imagination. Children can engage in new experiences, activities, roles and relationships on an on-going basis.
- All the information we receive about the world comes to us from **our senses**. Children learn about their bodies through their sense of touch, movement (vestibular), and body position (proprioception), and learn about their environment through sight, sound, smell and taste.
- Different learning styles – **visual**, 'Do you see what I mean'; **Audio**, 'Do you hear what I am saying'; **Tactile**, 'How does that feel'; **Kinaesthetic**, 'Does that make sense – constantly moving'.

Tina Bruce identifies **12 features of play** in Learning Through Play: Babies, Toddlers and the Foundation Years. Bruce states that if more than half are present, the play is quality play.

The 12 features of play:

1. Using first-hand experiences
2. Making up rules
3. Making props
4. Choosing to play
5. Rehearsing the future
6. Pretending
7. Playing alone
8. Playing together
9. Having a personal agenda
10. Being deeply involved
11. Trying out recent learning
12. Co-ordinating ideas, feelings and relationships for freeflow play.

Bruce, T. (2001) Learning through play: babies Toddlers and the Foundation Years. London: Hodder and Stoughton (p. 117)

These features can be useful to educators who are determined to value play and promote quality play.

Why the outdoors supports learning?

- Greater time and space for discovery, imaginary play, exploration.
- Descriptive language
- Much more engaging than the indoors - hardwired for the outdoors.
- Big questions and enquiries
- Big spaces support climbing, crouching, building - movement and development of sensory networks.
- Become skillful learners
- Opportunities for teambuilding, cooperation and problem-solving
- Healthy body - healthy mind
- Manage own risks



Peter Gray from Boston College says:

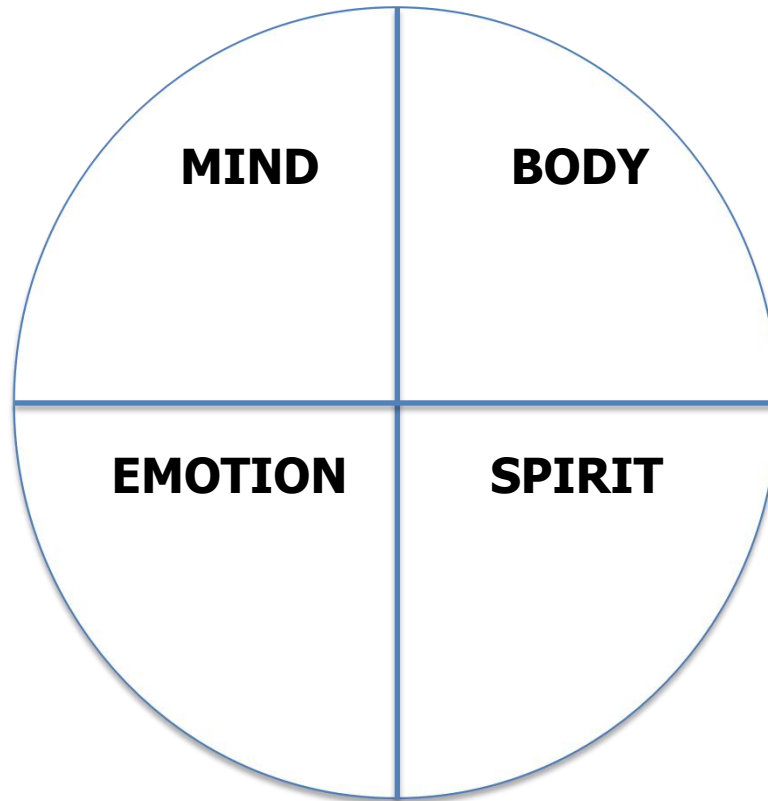
"If we deprive children of play they can't learn how to negotiate, control their own lives, see things from others' points of view, and compromise. Play is the place where children learn they are not the centre of the universe." And in case you're not sure: "When there's an adult there directing things, that is not play."

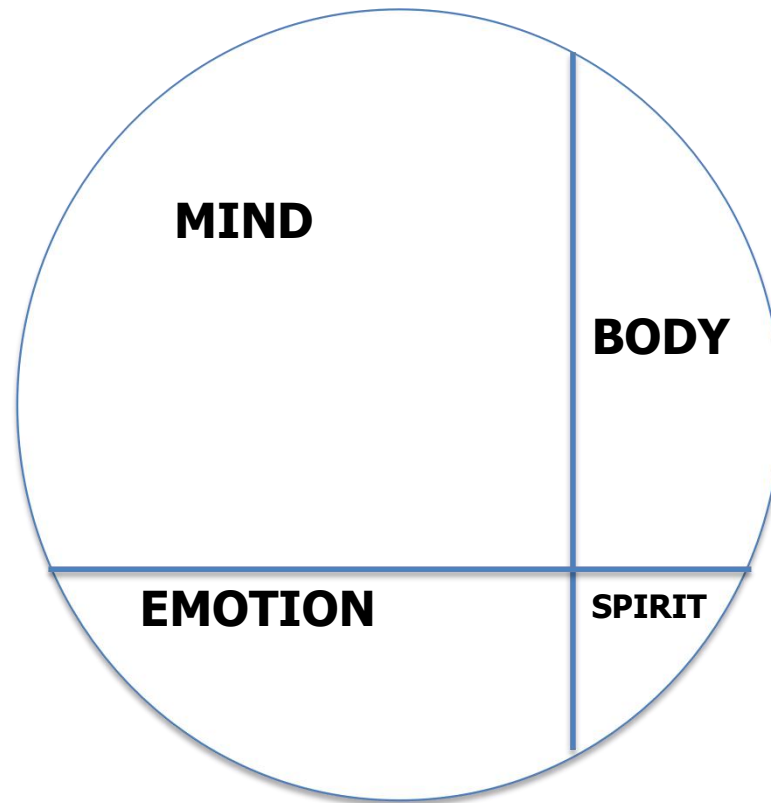
David Whitebread, University of Cambridge

"Kids deprived of playtime can't learn how to **"self-regulate"**, a fancy term for being able to control their own emotions and behaviour. It is so important for children's development The big job is to teach parents that they must spend time doing things playfully with their children if they want them to do well. **Self-regulation is a better predictor for how well children do later in life than reading and writing.**"



National Curriculum aims to “ Promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental, physical development of pupils at school and of society.”
Section 351 of the Education Act 1996





Redressing the balance:

Body

Outdoor play increases fitness levels and builds active, healthy bodies, an important strategy in helping the one in three American kids who are obese get fit.

Spending time outside raises levels of Vitamin D, helping protect children from future bone problems, heart disease, diabetes and other health issues.

Being out there improves distance vision and lowers the chance of nearsightedness.

Mind

Exposure to natural settings may be widely effective in reducing ADHD symptoms.

Children who spend time outdoors learn to work as a team and are better problem solvers as adults. They score higher on standardized tests in math, reading, writing and listening.

Exposure to environment-based education significantly increases student performance on tests of their critical thinking skills.

Spirit and emotion

Children's stress levels fall within minutes of seeing green spaces.

Play protects children's emotional development whereas loss of free time and a hurried lifestyle can contribute to anxiety and depression.

Nature makes you nicer, enhancing social interactions, value for community and close relationships

Kids who play together and organise games experience a constructive way to avoid social isolation

Being in nature offers a sense of belonging and responsibility as individuals of being a good neighbour to all forms of life.

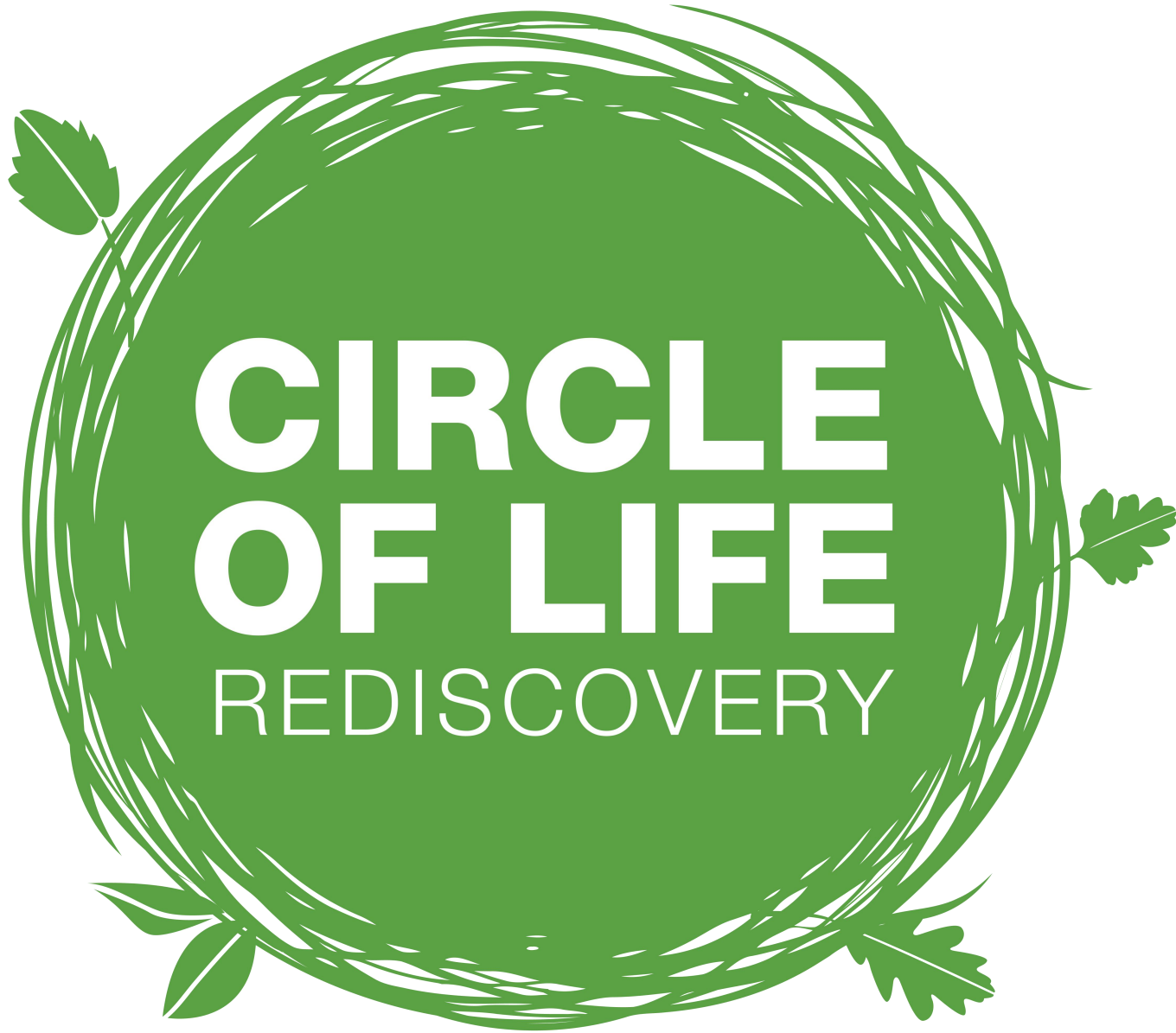
“Knowledge without love will not stick. But if love comes first, knowledge is sure to follow.” John Burroughs

What are we hoping for?

That young people experience:

- More fun
- More laughter
- More wild sense of freedom
- More satisfaction
- More profound feelings
- More confidence
- More happiness
- More growth
- More tolerance
- More safety in the unknown
- More ability to adapt





@outdoorteacher



/circleofliferediscovery