

complex ideas, to put a face to them and watch characters play them out in familiar ways. . . . I play as I do to show myself what my ideas are . . . we want to be surprised but also reassured that we know the territory.” And Yu-Ching Huang writes of a girl who pretends first to be a bee, and then a butterfly: “She wants to practice her thoughts so she will understand better. She wants to see and hear her thoughts in action.” Rich reflections like these spur readers to think about the meaning and importance of pretend play.

The book’s emphasis on the centrality of make-believe play in early-childhood education is refreshing and important. The author alerts preschool teachers to the essential contributions of solitary and socio-dramatic play to children’s development and well-being. In her gentle way, she criticizes the current overattention paid to academic achievements and discipline at the cost of the vital socio-emotional development that free play encourages. She shows that there is no such thing as “bad play” and that there are no children who do not know how to play. She acquaints the reader with a model preschool teacher who “is determined to treat the children as actors, not as outlaws, and she will join them in performance.”

Since this book is not a dry, academic treatise, nor a précis of empirical scientific research, preschool teachers, parents and other caretakers of children, and writers for children will particularly benefit from it. But everyone will enjoy it and learn from it. Paley’s insatiable curiosity about children’s fantasy play means she is intrigued and fascinated afresh by every new encounter with children at such play. This passion is contagious. Paley’s sensitive

observations and lyrical writing charm and captivate, compelling us to follow her into the magical but meaningful world of children’s pretend play.

—Shlomo Ariel, *David Yellin Academic College of Education, Jerusalem, Israel*

**The Art of Roughhousing:
Good Old-Fashioned Horseplay
and Why Every Kid Needs It**

*Anthony T. DeBenedet and
Lawrence J. Cohen*

Philadelphia: Quirk Books, 2010. Preface, illustrations, notes, references. 190 pp. \$14.95 paper. ISBN: 9781594744877

**Big Body Play: Why Boisterous,
Vigorous, and Very Physical
Play Is Essential to Children’s
Development and Learning**

Frances M. Carlson

Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2011. Introduction, illustrations, appendices, references. 103 pp. \$20.00. ISBN: 9781928896715

Given the increasing concern with childhood obesity and child inactivity, it is not surprising that two relatively recent publications focus on the importance of active, physical play in young children. These works convey a strong message to embrace and encourage rough physical play that adults (parents and teachers) often want to stop. *Big Body Play* by Frances M. Carlson and *The Art of Roughhousing* (2010) by Anthony T. DeBenedet and Lawrence J.

Cohen present two perspectives on active, physical play in children and share the message that this kind of play should, in fact, be encouraged as it offers benefits for several areas of child development.

Interestingly, while the two books address different audiences (Carlson's seems aimed at early-childhood education professionals; DeBenedt and Cohen's, at parents), they both do an impressive job of reviewing relevant research literature. Both books review pertinent and well-accepted research as a basis for their argument that roughhousing and big body play are naturally occurring and developmentally necessary behaviors.

Carlson's book offers a thorough analysis of what is known by others as rough-and-tumble play, super-hero play, and roughhousing. Her more expansive label helps the reader see the breadth of behaviors that fit into this category, and she does an admirable job of describing the various kinds of physical, exuberant, and spontaneous play that young children frequently and naturally assume.

The author begins by examining why parents and professionals have often felt compelled to stop this kind of play, and she attempts to dispel some of the misconceptions that have led to adults' discomfort with it. Carlson has compiled a comprehensive review of research that supports the claim that big body play is not the same as aggression or fighting and is not likely to escalate into aggression or fighting. Her review of the research is far from dry; rather, she has woven the research throughout a discussion of a common behavior that has, she argues, received an increasingly bad rap over the years. She masterfully uses scholarly research to paint

a picture of what this big body play looks like and how it differs from fighting and aggression and to catalog the potential benefits for children of engaging in physical, active play.

Carlson does not stop at describing big body play and arguing against banning such play. She also offers a substantial look at procedures for implementing big body play in programs serving young children. The author includes information on how to manage the risk potential, arrange the environment, and engage with children to support big body play. In the "FAQ" section, the reader feels involved in a question-and-answer session with the author and is allowed to work through some of those nagging concerns about implementing big body play in a structured program. Finally, the several appendices present more concrete tools to put into play the ideas Carlson presents. I recommend this book wholeheartedly to my fellow early-childhood educators and ask my students to read it at every opportunity.

In *The Art of Roughhousing*, DeBenedt and Cohen also build a case for the benefits of children engaging in exuberant, spontaneous, physical play. This book seems aimed directly at parents who have shied away from rough play, both their children's participation and their own. In fact, the book, written by two dads, may be more specifically designed for fathers who have stopped or never attempted to involve their children in roughhousing. The two prefaces, one by each of the authors, support this sense that it was written by dads for dads.

In the first chapter of this small book, the authors present a case for the value of rough play, relying on relevant research to

support their case. Writing in a conversational tone, the authors draw the reader in to the discussion of what research teaches about the benefits of physical play. Relying on both human and animal research, DeBenedet and Cohen build an argument to convince even the most ardent opponents of rough play.

The remainder of the book is a bit surprising. In the remaining six chapters, the authors explain, illustrate, and teach adults how to roughhouse. They begin by encouraging parents to explore such activities in a section called “Get Started with Instant Roughhousing.” In this chapter, they lay out some helpful hints to make roughhousing fun and free from (serious) injury, and then they describe “moves” to get the reader started in the role of parental roughhousing facilitator. From classics such as Airplane (think of lying on your back with the baby balanced on your up-stretched knees) to Olympus Mons (imagine acting out an erupting volcano) the authors describe activities that will get the reader roughhousing in no time at all. Chapters 3 through 6 offer examples of themed activities and present line-drawn sketches to illustrate what these activities might look like. For example, in the chapter titled “Flight,” the parent reads about how to toss a child in playful and enjoyable ways. While surprising, these sketches and clear instructions on roughhousing offer a unique perspective on rough play. This instruction manual for playing with a child may seem unusual to some, but for the parent who wants to be more physical and does not know where to start, this is a useful guide. This unique approach to encouraging adults to rethink the rough, physical, sometimes worrisome play of

children should be commended. The effort to go beyond a conceptual discussion of rough play with children, to provide concrete examples of how this play actually happens and what it looks like is laudable and offers a service to parents not found in other books on play.

—Brenda Boyd, *Washington State University, Pullman, WA*

Games Primates Play: An Undercover Investigation of the Evolution and Economics of Human Relationships

Dario Maestriperi

New York: Basic Books, 2012. Contents, images, notes, references, index. 302 pp. \$27.99 cloth. ISBN: 9780465020782

I should first make one thing plain: Dario Maestriperi’s *Games Primates Play* is not a book about primate play behavior. In fact, the book mentions neither games nor playing—at least not in the sense of our collective pursuits as play researchers. Rather, it concerns human relationships and social currencies. Thus “games” refers to human politicking, cooperation, and social-behavioral quirks. Why do we avoid eye contact with other people in elevators? What does the length of an e-mail response indicate about rank and status? How might taking a colleague to lunch trump work ethic alone in determining whether or not you receive a promotion at work? What does your ability to recover from a lover’s tiff indicate about your rank in a romantic relationship? Maestriperi takes the reader on a journey through the

