



FROM

to

with Energy!

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From A to Z with Energy!

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For Ocean, Emily, Ellie, Andrew, and Maggie,
and all children who fill the world with energy and joy



Time to **PLAY** and have **some fun**,
trying **NEW THINGS** **ONE** by **ONE**.



ARE YOU READY? ARE YOU SET?
Let's explore the **ALPHABET!**



A IS FOR **ACTIVITY.**
You're **BUSY** all day long!



B is for **OUR BODIES,** so
let's **work** to keep
THEM STRONG.

MOVING is Learning (and Fun)!

A Guide for Parents, Teachers, and Caregivers

Children want and need opportunities to be active, whether structured or informal, inside or outdoors. The activities in this book offer fun ideas for children to move in many different ways.

PHYSICAL BENEFITS OF MOVEMENT

There are a variety of reasons why it is important to give children movement opportunities throughout the day. Regular exercise helps children develop valuable physical skills while they learn how their bodies move. Exercise also helps children develop muscle strength, flexibility, balance, expanded range of motion of their joints, and large and small motor skills. Active children are also likely to continue the healthy habit of regular exercise throughout their lives.

Additionally, movement activities help children develop important aspects of physical self-awareness, including:

- **Body awareness and control.** Children can learn how different parts of their bodies and joints move and gain awareness of their breathing.
- **Spatial awareness.** Children can learn direction, level, and size of movement. They gain an

awareness of the shapes their bodies can make within a space and become aware of others' movements within a shared space. Children can start to understand the boundaries of a shared space.



- **Awareness of speed.** Children can learn to control their starting and stopping, can understand and learn to control their own speed, and can learn about rhythm.
- **Awareness of energy.** Children can learn to control the amount of energy required to perform a certain movement (for example, the difference between stepping quietly, marching, and stomping).

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL BENEFITS OF MOVEMENT

Beyond the physical benefits, structured movement for children can have a positive impact on their social-emotional learning. Activities like taking turns, solving problems in a group or individually, delaying gratification, and listening to and following instructions can help foster social-emotional development. Group movement activities can also familiarize children with concepts such as:

- **Personal space.** Children learn about personal space and respecting others' space as everyone moves together in a shared space. To practice the idea of personal space with your child, imagine you are each in a bubble the size of the reach of your arms and legs in all directions while you are standing in one spot. First, explore your bubble to get familiar with its dimensions, then practice walking in a relatively small space together, trying

not to “touch” each other’s imaginary bubbles. Start moving slowly at first, then progressively move faster and closer to each other. Add music and try other ways to move, such as turning, stopping and starting, and walking in different directions. After this activity, reinforce that in group movement situations, it is helpful to think of everyone as having a bubble of space around them.

- **Emotional self-awareness and self-expression.** Some children are more comfortable expressing themselves physically. For example, a child might not be able to state verbally how she is feeling, but she might be able to show her feelings using movement. Ask children to make a wide range of faces (happy, sad, angry, silly, afraid, shy, surprised, and so on), and ask them to express these emotions using their bodies as well. Ask children: “Which of these emotions are you feeling right now?” Play some music and let children dance their emotions or any of the emotions corresponding to the facial expressions they explored. Exercises such as these not only validate children’s feelings, but also help them express and understand those feelings in a safe, controlled environment.
- **Empathy and kindness.** Using books and stories can help teach empathy and kindness. After reading a book or telling a story, guide children to “dance the story.” Children can choose to dance about a certain character or characters as you give simple