

# Balancing Risk In Outdoor Play

The Curious Sparrow Dayhome

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## Introduction

In FLIGHT, Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework, the image of the "Mighty Learner" is at the forefront; a core value reflected in the curriculum framework that guides Early Childhood Educators in their daily interactions with the children they work with and how they engage in the process of co-inquiry, co-constructing knowledge and make children's learning visible.

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A “Mighty Learner” provides an image of a child that is “strong, resourceful and capable”<sup>1</sup>. An unfortunate reality of licensed childcare settings is that there seems to be a low tolerance for allowing risky play, perhaps due to fear of liability, lack of experience balancing risk or other individual factors, and these attitudes are incongruent with the image of the “Mighty Learner”. Too often, Educators are complicit in undermining the image of a “Mighty Learner” when they communicate their fear, anxiety and lack of trust in the child’s capabilities when they prohibit risky play or use ambiguous warnings, like “be careful”, when children are engaging in risky play.

According to Émilie Beaulieu, a Canadian pediatrician behind the position statement on risky play published by the Canadian Pediatric Society, “children should be kept as safe as necessary during play, not as safe as possible”<sup>2</sup>. This is a profound statement that provokes further consideration that risk is a normal and required aspect in healthy early childhood development.

In Tim Gill’s book “No Fear: Growing up in a Risk Averse Society”, he speaks of living in a “culture of fear”, which is described as a “generalized and insidious anxiety about safety that has found expression in fears for children even though they are statistically safer than at any point in human history”<sup>3</sup>. Viewing risky play as inherently dangerous and something to avoid, lacks appreciation for the role that risk has in children’s early childhood experiences and how adults can encourage and support children’s exposure to risky play opportunities in order to benefit the child’s development and well-being.

Gabriela Bento and Gisela Dias mirror the belief that cultural attitudes are shaping professional attitudes towards children’s involvement in risky play wherein it is stated that “a culture of fear lead us to underestimate what children are capable to do, creating an even more ‘dangerous learning environment’, where children do not have the possibility to learn, by experience, how to stay safe”<sup>4</sup>. Bento and Dias further note, that when children do

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<sup>1</sup> Makovichuk, L., Hewes, J., Lirette, P., & Thomas, N. (2014). Flight: Alberta's early learning and child care framework. <http://flightframework.ca> p. 38).

<sup>2</sup> <https://cps.ca/en/media/risky-play-can-enhance-childrens-health-and-wellbeing>

<sup>3</sup> Tim Gill, No Fear: Growing up in a Risk Averse Society, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (2007), P.14

<sup>4</sup> The Importance of Outdoor Play for Young Children’s Health Development, Porto Biomedical Journal, [www://portobiomedicaljournal.com/](http://www://portobiomedicaljournal.com/), pg. 159.

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not have opportunity for risky play, they will “not know how to deal with unpredictable environments and will lack the necessary confidence to overcome challenges in an autonomous way (pg. 159).

### **Risky Play Defined:**

An article titled “Outdoor Risky Play” written by researchers in Norway, defined “risky play” as “thrilling and exciting form of physical play that involve uncertainty and risk physical injury” and outlined 8 categories of risky play:<sup>5</sup>

- 1) play with heights (climbing, jumping, hanging/dangling or balancing)
- 2) Play with speed (bicycling, sledding, running)
- 3) Play with dangerous tools (axe, saw, knife, ropes)
- 4) play near dangerous elements (water, fire pit)
- 5) rough and tumble play (wrestling, fighting, fencing, play with sticks)
- 6) play where children explore alone (without supervision and where there are no fences, such as in the woods)
- 7) play with impact (crashing into something repeatedly)
- 8) vicarious play (watching someone else engage in risk)

### **Benefits of Risky Play**

Risky play supports children in developing skills for assessing risk and problem solving. Risky play aids children in evaluating challenges and helps them exercise self-determination in choosing how to approach the challenge and determine their comfort level based on experience and skill they have developed (Beaulieu, 2024). Having opportunity for risky play will allow children develop confidence, overcome fears and grow their motor skills that will give them better body awareness (p. 127)<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> (Sandseter EBH, Kleppe R. Outdoor Risky Play. In: Tremblay RE, Boivin M, Peters RDeV, eds. Brussoni M, topic ed. Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development[online]. <https://www.child-encyclopedia.com/outdoor-play/according-experts/outdoor-risky-play>. Updated: October 2024. Accessed March 8, 2025.

<sup>6</sup> Hanscoms, A. (2016) *Balanced and Barefoot: How Unrestricted outdoor play makes for strong, confident and capable children*. New Harbinger Publications

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Risk taking in play gives children time to learn about themselves, to become aware of their abilities and interests and gain a sense of how to take responsibility of their own safety in a developmentally appropriate manner (p 43)<sup>7</sup>. Children can work through emotions, which promotes emotional regulation, as they experience anxiety or frustration as they work on mastery of a challenging skill, such as finding new heights climbing a tree (Pg 76).<sup>8</sup>

### **Empowering Risky Play: Role of the Educator to Uplift and Empower**

The way we interact with children as they engage in risky play can instill fear and reduce their confidence. Language during our interactions should be solution focused and enhance children's ability for problem solving. Blurting out "be careful" is a knee jerk reaction we have all experienced, and likely with regret, when we realize that it is not helpful for children as it provides no clarity around what the risk is nor does it offer solutions to approach the risk safely. Becoming more aware of language during risky play can help guide Educators support children in navigating risks more independently, which supports problem solving skills.

Educators carry the responsibility of creating environments where children's basic right of play is honoured, finding the balance of what acceptable risk looks like for each child, and honouring each child's need for time and space to have freedom to pursue play and learning experiences that are engaging, interesting and motivates them (p.28)<sup>9</sup>

There are Canadian Organizations, such "Outside Play UBC Lab", who promote risky play and provide practical advice on how adults can support children in balancing risk and benefit and how to respond instead of reacting, to allow children to become involved in risky play.

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<sup>7</sup> Gill, T., Power, M., & Brussoni, M. (2019). Risk Benefit Assessment for Outdoor Play: A Canadian Toolkit. Ottawa: Child & Nature Alliance of Canada.  
<https://indd.adobe.com/view/44ed054b-917b-4e02-a1e3-e6c4cbfe0360>

<sup>8</sup> Hanscoms, A (2016): Balanced and Barefoot: How unrestricted outdoor play makes strong, confident and capable children. New Harbinger Publications

<sup>9</sup> Gill, T., Power, M., & Brussoni, M. (2019). Risk Benefit Assessment for Outdoor Play: A Canadian Toolkit. Ottawa: Child & Nature Alliance of Canada.  
<https://indd.adobe.com/view/44ed054b-917b-4e02-a1e3-e6c4cbfe0360>

# FREEDOM



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Try implementing a Risk-Benefit Assessment:  
*REFLECT BEFORE REFLEX*



STOP

yourself before you respond to, or stop children's play



LOOK & LISTEN

to what is happening. What are the children doing?



THINK

are the children managing the risks? What might be the impact of adult involvement on children's play?



ACT

now you can respond in a thoughtful way, rather than by reflex



REFLECT

was your action the correct one? What have you learned?



TIP : 17 SECOND RULE: WAIT 17 SECONDS BEFORE INTERVENING TO LET IT PLAY OUT



FOR MORE INFO  
[WWW.OUTSIDEPLAY.CA](http://WWW.OUTSIDEPLAY.CA)

SCAN HERE TO WATCH AN INTRO VIDEO AND LEARN MORE.



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## Tree Climbing:



One day last summer, I had a group of children who were interested in retrieving a kite that had hooked itself high in the tree. It was a difficult tree to climb without many limbs within reach for the children. They tried and ultimately concluded that they were not ready or able to complete this climb.

During my childhood, we spent lots of time climbing and I remembered how much we enjoyed the challenge of achieving new heights. So on this date with the group of children, I felt compelled to challenge myself. I asked the children if they thought I could rescue the kite; some said yes, some said no. I think they couldn't imagine seeing an adult engaging in what they perceive as "child's play", so many of them were in disbelief when I climbed as high as I could and retrieved the kite. I remember when I got to the top, they cheered and some asked "how did you do that!?" I told the kids I was a tree-climbing kid when I was their age and that I am still up for a challenge. What was important for me in this moment, was for the children to recognize that as they grow, so too will their skill if they persevere in the challenges they face.

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How we communicate to children can help or hinder them in building skills or achieving mastery. We can create unnecessary anxiety and provoke feelings of incompetency rather than empowerment depending on how we communicate to children.



We have some “ground rules” for climbing, such as having an adult close enough to help if they get scared or need help to prevent a fall, and one climber per branch, to keep each other safe. Aside from that, we have encouraged the children to problem solve their climbing, such as how to have inner dialogue needed for assessing safety of the tree or branch.

- Is the branch strong? How do I know if the branch is strong?
- If shake the branch a little to test the strength, is it shaking a lot or a little?
- Does the tree look healthy for a climber? What do I notice that tells me the tree is strong?

To encourage safety, we use language like:

- “use your strong hands and feet while you climb”
- “focus on your body and what you are doing”
- “you are strong, you can do hard things”
- “ask for help if you need to, I’ll stay close by”

**Stick and weapon play:**



Stick and weapon play is a form of play that our group enjoys. The children often engage in imaginative play with narratives with “good guys” and “bad guys”. We hear ourselves telling the children “sticks need space” and reminding children with the really big sticks to “remember how big it is”, to encourage spatial awareness, when they are manoeuvring it close to their friends. We also remind the children who don’t have the sticks to “give sticks space so you aren’t accidentally hit.”

Originally, I was not a fan of weapon play, especially when the children would talk about killing and it felt like I was condoning violence. I found a new perspective to see benefit in this type of chosen play. I have begun to view this type of play as learning of “morality” and how children can re-enact right and wrong, social norms such as respect, justice and their understanding of how some rules exist to promote the greater good of society.

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According to FLIGHT, Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework, "at play, children are empowered to learn on their own terms, on their own ways, and in their own time. Play allows children to take their own initiative, to test their physical and mental limits, to explore positions of power and question good and evil. In Play, children use words and symbols to transform the world around them, creating worlds where they can act 'as if' rather than 'as is. Play is a pleasurable and highly motivating context in which children can explore possibilities and solve problems that are beyond their reach in ordinary life (p 98)<sup>10</sup>".

When I considered what this type of play offered, I began to see how it becomes rich in language development as children create their own narrative, negotiate roles and plot, and I began to notice how children created imaginary conflict situations in order to practice problem solving, conflict resolution skills, and emotional regulation as they learn to compromise with their friends in order for the dynamic play to evolve. It is empowering for the children to have this type of uninterrupted play, especially knowing that in many other environments they are not allowed to have sticks and are not trusted to play with them.

I recall being in public spaces with other community childcare providers and hearing the educators scolding the children "that's not safe", when they were playing with sticks they found on the ground. The Educator took the stick from the child and put it in garbage can. I couldn't help but feel sad for that child. I remember thinking, how many moments of rich play do Educators, as the "caring adults", take away and how many messages the children receive that they can not be trusted. In that moment, I saw how the language we use and our interactions can unintentionally undermine our image of the child as capable, competent and trustworthy.

### **Dangerous Elements:**

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<sup>10</sup> Makovichuk, L., Hewes, J., Lirette, P., & Thomas, N. (2014). Flight: Alberta's early learning and child care framework. <http://flightframework.ca>



We can not have fires with our program, due to bi-law restrictions. We often cook meals and practice using a butane stove for food preparation. When the children want to help cook, we have provided ground rules, such as “sitting only” when close to the heat source, play can not happen near the “safety circle” boundary that we create with our “leader rope” (the neon rope we hold onto to walk on the street). When it is time to eat, the children gather together, a safe distance from anything hot, the stove is turned off and we serve the children a warm meal and sit with them. Our stove is always supervised by an adult.

**Rough and Tumble Play:**



## “ci-ça dizzy play”

*Because Forest School Fridays foster infectious joy and laughter that we feel from being together enjoying “dizzy play”!*



We ventured into the woods for “Forest school Friday” to indulge in unstructured forest play, a great way to connect with nature and use the natural loose parts that are abundant in the Birchwood Trails! For our “home school friday” we packed our lunches for an afternoon of connection outside the four walls of the traditional classroom.



*“they revel in their power to turn the world upside down, playfully confident they can restore it (pg. 101)”*

There were a number of logs lying on the ground in the open area where we visit. Priya began to set up a “see saw” and asked her friends to help her move and position the logs. Thomas, Dashiell, Feli, Bennett, Callie and Mateo were immediately interested in participating in the play. The children, together, set up 3 see saws and partnered up in groups of two. They playfully shared their ideas on how to match up partners according to weight and eventually they partnered up based on comfort level for more rowdy play. Some of the children began to increase their intensity of the “dizzy play”, which became exaggerated with faster “ups and downs” and tumbles off the log onto the muddy ground. The children were observing each other’s enjoyment of play and eventually wanted to shared the experience with more friends so they sat together, closer on one log.

The dizzy play exploded into exuberant play and nothing but laughter could be heard throughout the otherwise tranquil wooded area. As Makovichuk states in Alberta’s Early Learning Framework, “this kind of play is exhilarating and infectious, creating communities through shared laughter(pg. 101)”.

I watched as the children fell off the log, holding onto each other fiercely and landing on each other, they quickly jumped back onto the log to repeat the experience of rough and tumble play, with more smiles and laughter each time the play resumed. “Dizzy play” is a valuable form of play for children as it provides “a release of physical energy, a sense of power, and often an expression of pure joy (pg. 101)”.

Today’s play was very contagious and they way the children engaged with ones other emphasized the value of the relationships that have formed in the months we have all been together. The children’s trust of each other allowed them to enjoy this play that took them to their personal edge and their was a strong sense of participation in group play that feels good for the soul with non-stop laughter.

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Rough and tumble play is also something the children enjoy greatly, especially when they can share laughter. Rough and tumble play has been a valuable way to teach the children about consent: how do we know when the other children are enjoying and agreeable to this play and how can we detect if the other child(ren) is not longer willing to participate.

I've noticed the children have developed their own "code" to indicate they are not participating at this moment or they need a break. They will tell the other children "T time out", sometimes they show with a hand gesture with their hands held in a cross formation, and move away from the play.

If the play becomes too rough or occurs in a way and the child is struggling to communicate verbally, but it is evident with facial expression that they are experiencing discomfort, I will highlight this to the other child, so that they can pause and observe their friends' level of comfort with their activity. I might announce, "it looks like \_\_\_\_\_ is not enjoying this", can we take a break to find out." Or I might ask the child, "do you need a "T time out", or if the play has resulted in someone becoming hurt, I will call a "T time out" to stop the play immediately. I remind the children when a child is taking a "T time out", they will rejoin when they are comfortable, which usually doesn't take long, even after a few tears.

### **Play with speed:**

We live near an urban forest with a vast (135km) trail system. When the snow melts and it is safe to resume activities on wheels, our children enjoy bringing scooters and bikes for trail days or for field trips to the outdoor rink that is used for inline skating in the summer. We have had a few minor accidents, but nothing major.



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**What term: adventurous play or risky play?**



I prefer “risky play”, although in reality I have to remind myself, because I am inclined to view it as just play, that I monitor/supervise to ensure that children won’t encounter any unforeseen hazards, like climbing a dead tree that will break or balancing on a log that had sticks underneath that could impale or injure them should they fall on it.

While I classify it as “risky play” when communicating with other Educators, the Agency who I am licensed with, I prefer to refer to it as what they are practicing: descending/ascending a steep hill, balancing on a log, stick play etc. It does feel somewhat unnatural referring to it as “risky play”, because of the negative association to danger. Also, when I was a child, “risky play” activities that came with a potential for harm, was just our everyday play. We fell off of our bikes, jumped out of trees, played on the water’s edge and navigated large

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rocks on shorelines, explored in ponds and came home dirty and wet, with tadpole eggs. We had freedom to explore the woods accompanied by an older sibling for hours, building tree forts and fully immersed in our imaginative play. It's hard to imagine the exact type of activities that built our capacity to navigate life's challenges and left us with stories of minor injuries is today deemed "risky play", as if we were living dangerously. For us, it was experiencing a wild and free childhood that supported our resilience and well-being.

### **Risk activities not practiced:**

Use of fire is something we do not incorporate into programming. Fort McMurray has strict by-laws related to fire building on municipal land. It is prohibited and after the 2016 fire which nearly burned down city, it is something that I consider high risk, for the children's safety off-site and also for the safety of our community. We have experienced situations with children running away or physical aggression in the past. These situations require one Educator to respond to the emergent situation and the other attends to supervision of the rest, therefore we need a method to shut down a heat source immediately in case of emergency.

We also don't incorporate knife activities in our programming. In part, because we have a mixed age group and supervision can feel demanding with the younger children having a higher needs for close supervision. I do not have much experience with using knives and my comfort would first need to expand. I would also need further consultation with licensing around incorporating knife work. Our provincial licensing safety checklist completed by my Agency's consultant, to monitor licensing adherence, stipulates that knives must be kept out of reach for children.

### **What are the results of aspiring to have a zero-risk program?**

If programs do not encourage risky play, children will not have opportunities to improve or advance strength, coordination, resilience, problem-solving and confidence (pg 173).<sup>11</sup> When children are overprotected, they have fewer opportunities to engage in risk and

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<sup>11</sup> Hanscoms, A. (2016) *Balanced and Barefoot: How Unrestricted outdoor play makes for strong, confident and capable children*. New Harbinger Publications

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therefore will experience more difficulty in learning the consequences of their actions (p. 43).<sup>12</sup>

Children will learn to stay in their comfort zone, they will not experience the sense of accomplishment. I imagine the loss of excitement to explore the world around you, one where you feel anxious about the things outside of your control and the sense of helplessness you might experience when you find yourself trying to navigate the unpredictability of life circumstances.

### **What factors influence the perception of the level of risk?**

My program is mixed ages. When I first opened in 2023, my youngest child was 1 year old and oldest was 6 years old. It was difficult to imagine an approach to assessing risky play for all and managing risk with no knowledge of each child's prior experience, strengths, and tolerance level for navigating risky play. For me, what risk looks like for a child depends on their age and current abilities, their degree of exposure to risky play, what developmental milestones they have mastered, which challenges are they motivated to conquer, what is the child's perception of risk, what support do I think the child needs for mastery and what support (if any) does the child think they need for mastery.

### **Balancing risk and children's safety:**

After I have considered the child's capabilities, how they approach risk and can be supported to engage in age appropriate risky play that respects their autonomy while bringing risk to an acceptable level, I consider what are my own biases that might interfere with that child's success in engaging in risky play and my relationship of trust with the child.

Trust is a dynamic relationship we work on with the children we are raising and working with. When I think of how my parents trusted me enough to take risks and how I thoroughly enjoyed my childhood, exploring and challenging myself, this translates into my desire to uplift children to find their confidence, to know they are strong, capable and can

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<sup>12</sup> Gill, T., Power, M., & Brussoni, M. (2019). Risk Benefit Assessment for Outdoor Play: A Canadian Toolkit. Ottawa: Child & Nature Alliance of Canada.  
<https://indd.adobe.com/view/44ed054b-917b-4e02-a1e3-e6c4cbfe0360>

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do hard things with persistence and grit. I know that if I have assessed risks as being “low risk” for a serious harm, then it must be my own fear or inability to give full trust for the child to know what they are capable of; in these circumstances I encourage myself to step back.



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My own children have challenged me to step back and trust them; trust that they know what they are capable of, that they can determine what is within reach. I have learned to step back at my own discomfort, to watch them build confidence and skill to accomplish what they aspire to do and push the limit a little more each time.

When I think of my own aversion to risk, from the standpoint of fear of injury, I think of each time I have witnessed my children in risky play and held my breath. I think of the times that I have held my breath, felt my heart in my throat, and then the joy and sheer excitement my child and I felt as they accomplished exactly what they set out to do.

There are many times my children have asserted their confidence and desire to accept a challenge that my inner voice wanted to say “no”, or help them when they did not want or need my help. I have learned not to let my fears shadow my children’s inner confidence and I trust that what my children need from me is to pick them up and dust them off when they experience a minor setback, so that they can persevere.

My 3 children have all been attracted to risky play and activities that challenged them physically, from a young age. My children have all learned how to manage risk with balance, speed and agility from young ages, and I attribute this to being permitted to engage in risk and me doing my best to move out of their way (as much as I could).

My youngest has been influenced most from being around a group of older children in our dayhome. Seeing what others are capable of has challenged him to take risks and he thrives when he sees what he is capable of, and that has helped him with mastery of biking, scootering, climbing, skiing, balancing over logs and “keeping up” with the big kids at the tender age of 2 years old. I have noticed that when my risk-averse thoughts become loud in my mind and I have tried to “help” my two year old without invitation, for example when he was learning to ski, he will establish boundaries with me without hesitation. He affirmed: “my do it by my own self” and that’s exactly what he did, much to my amazement.

**“Forest and Nature School Educators mitigate risk by providing for the learner’s basic needs, choosing appropriate sites and completing site assessments (p. 4)”<sup>13</sup>**

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<sup>13</sup> When I Go Outside: The Seven Relationships of an Ethical Forest and Nature School, Child and Nature Alliance of Canada

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It feels different to allow someone else's children to engage in risky play, compared to my own, not because I feel like the actions I take to ensure safety would be different, but I feel under scrutiny from knowing that we live in a society that doesn't tolerate risk, especially in licensed settings. When I first began visiting off-site with children, I would hear other Educators scolding children for climbing, running, and it was as if the child was attached to the Educator by a short leash as they were told to come closer as they explored.

Although I had not been introduced to site risk assessments, I approached our spot in the woods and visited it many times with my own children many times before I ever came as a licensed caregiver. I examined our space for potential risks with plans to mitigate them. On our first visit with the dayhome, I remember thinking about risk situations, like how we would deal with a runaway child or potential wildlife encounter. We supervised the children's play closely to see how they would engage with risky play, such as climbing, balancing, navigating a treed area with stumps, branches and other plant debris. We engaged the children in a "walk around" of a small designated part of land and laid down orange cones and put on everyone's fluorescent vest. Educators were flabbergasted when I told them we play "outside the fence", that we explore in a forested area, that we plan on fallen logs and with sticks and enjoy cooking meals together in the forest.

I educated myself on our biggest risk; bear encounters and developed an "entering routine" which included a "bear demonstration" where the children take turns pretending to be the threatening bear and the forest friends so we can practice how we will respond to a bear encounter and the children become familiar with how I will respond with pepper spray (if necessary) to keep them safe. We also include "bear yelling" in our entering routine, which is making as much noise as we can, through shouting words the children choose from the entert of trail until we enter the woods. The kids pick words like "pineapple" and "chocolate cake" etc, and we count to 3 and yell it as loud as we can. We laugh and we are doing our part to ensure we don't startle bears who might be in the forest. Our entering routine is centred on wild-life encounter prevention and reinforcing our most important rule: "staying together", to prevent becoming lost or a child encountering wild-life or other risk situation without an adult nearby. I also prioritized taking training on Wildlife and Bear Awareness Course, which was completed in February 2025. I also completed a 45 hour

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professional development course “Outdoor Play Training” in September 2024, which included a module on risky play outside and has informed how we play outside.

I am happy to say that we have visited the site enough that the children are very familiar with all the play aspects, they have developed the ability to pick out many safety concerns independently. For example, there is a “bouncy log” that the kids sit on and bounce. There are branches with sharp edges that could poke their face with the up-down movement. Now, when the children go onto the log, they see this risk and they cover the stick with a spare mitten so that they can enjoy the risky play on the “bouncy log” without risk of cutting their face or injuring their eye. Even though I test the strength of the “bouncy log” frequently, I see the children testing it by seeing what sound it makes if they apply weight, trying to determine if it is safe for their play.





At times, I have worried that parents or my licensing agency would believe I did something negligent if child was accidentally hurt in my care while engaging in risky play. Because of the duty of care that is attached with providing licensed childcare, I have felt personally responsible for injuries, even if minor, and worry if someone will question my judgement in allowing certain types of play, even though I know the benefits outweigh the potential harm.

I believe that working in child protection for over a decade, which is a system designed for recognizing and responding to risk, has influenced my capacity to tolerate risk, envision and implement mitigation plans for risk and has given me a confidence that has allowed me to think of childcare outside the traditional setting that is contained by walls. I am thankful for the resources in the risk-benefit assessment for outdoor play, especially the informed consent and site assessment tools. The information in these documents is something that can be somewhat difficult to articulate in such thorough detail in

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conversation with parents, other educators and licensing bodies, and the resources are something I plan to include in future work if I expand my program or enroll new children/families.

Although I know that minor injuries are normal, it is something that I need to remind myself, and I have tried to document children's learning for parents and administrators who monitor my program, in a way that showcases children's desire to engage in risky play, the benefits for their development and also how children's confidence grows each time they realize "I can do it".

I am fortunate that I have maintained consistent group of children and parents who have attended my dayhome since September 2023, and through ongoing conversation and documentation, parents have also become vocal in their appreciation for their child's opportunity for risky play and they expressed their understanding that minor injuries are normal and the benefits outweigh small scrapes and bruises.

Just as I have learned to trust in my relationship with the children and their abilities, their parents have learned to trust that I have their children's best interests and well-being as my priority and that I am also balancing the risks and benefits in our risky play by meeting their child where they are and allowing them to take the lead in determining their comfort level for risky play.