

## **Dirt and Behavior**

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What does digging in the dirt have to do with behavior? Actually, a lot! When you introduce young children to gardening and growing plants, you teach them about nature and how to care for living things. Children learn about scientific concepts, eye-hand coordination, sorting, and patience. Additionally, digging in the dirt and learning about gardening can also help children with their behavior. Many researchers and scientists say playing in dirt helps reduce anxiety and stress in young children. In fact, according to Dr. Frances E. Kuo, "It's easy to see the effect when you watch children play outside. Kids are different when they're outdoors; free of school pressures and hurried schedules, they relax and simply become kids. In fact, according to one study, children's stress levels fall within minutes of seeing green

Spaces, making outside play a simple, no-cost, and time-efficient antidote for an overstressed child." Studies also show that not only is making mud pies and digging in the dirt beneficial to the emotional well-being of a child, but it also helps improve their ability to stay on task and learn new skills in the classroom. Child development experts agree that exposure to nature helps with problem-solving, critical thinking and cooperation. According to the National Wildlife Federation, "Outdoor time helps children grow lean and strong, enhances imaginations and attention spans, decreases aggression, and boosts class-room performance. In addition, children who spend time in nature regularly are shown to become better stewards of the environment."

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