



The activities suggested in this booklet are based on the Principles of Theraplay and are designed to help you connect and have fun together.

Theraplay is organised around 4 dimensions which are considered necessary for child development and for life-long resilience: structure, engagement, nurture and challenge.

For more information about Theraplay training, please contact:

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Try to find 10 minutes where you can put together a few activities in a short sequence and enjoy some connected time together in play. This will help your child feel safe, have fun and regulate their emotions.



Structure

Structure is about making the world predictable and organised and includes organising a safe feeling environment. It benefits children who are overactive, undirected, overstimulated or need to feel high levels of control.

- Cotton ball blow: Adult and child hold one end of a scarf or long cloth between them and blow a cotton ball back and forth. The adult says 'ready, steady, go'. You can add more cotton balls or increase the length of the scarf for older children.
- Drawing around hands, feet or bodies: Make a picture of your child's hand or foot by drawing around it. Can you draw around the whole body (if it feels safe to do this)? Talk about what you're doing whilst drawing. Can you colour it in together?
- Funny ways to cross the room: You and your child stand at one end of a room and say you are both going to cross the room in a certain way (hopping, tip toeing, backwards, crawling, wheelbarrow or like lots of different animals).
- La La magnets: You and your child sit opposite each other with your hands together in the middle. Swing them from side to side singing 'la la la' then adult says a body part and you match them together (for example, thumbs, put your thumbs together like magnets / noses, put your noses together like magnets).
- Pop the bubble: Blow a bubble and catch it on a wand. Playfully tell your child to pop the bubble with a particular body part, for example, little finger or toes. Then you can do this blowing lots of bubbles.
- Simon says: Take it turns to be the leader. The leader gives instructions to copy starting with 'Simon says...' Occasionally give the instruction without saying Simon says, your child has to not copy when Simon doesn't say!

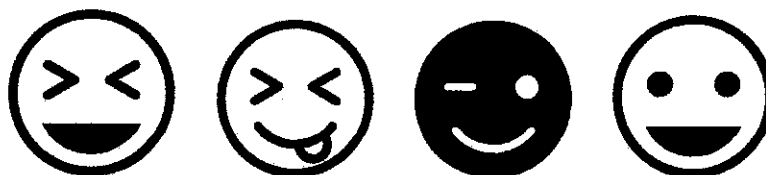




Engagement

Engagement is about helping a child to feel safe internally and to regulate their inner emotions. Its about playfulness and spontaneous joy. It benefits children who are withdrawn, avoidant of contact or too rigidly structured.

- Copy funny faces: Sit facing your child, pull a funny face, can your child copy it?
- Check ups, check your child brought their big smile to play, check they brought their ears, did they bring wiggly toes or still toes? Go through lots of body parts. Did they bring strong arm muscles, can they show you? Did they bring long legs? Etc.
- Foil prints: use tin foil to make impressions of different body parts (make a robot glove with foil using your child's hand. Can you make them a robot leg by wrapping foil around their leg? Etc.
- Fortune telling: Take your child's hand in yours and pretend in a playful way to tell their fortune. Say lots of positive and playful things.
- Play hand clapping games such as Patty Cake and A Sailor Went to Sea. Google different hand clapping patterns for older children. There are some great challenges to learn!!!
- Sticker match: use two sets of stickers, stick one on your child's nose (if they are comfortable with that). Ask them to make you match. Repeat until you both have lots of stickers matching. Check out how silly you look in a mirror together.





Nurture

Nurture is about feeling worthy of love, feeling reduced stress and a sense of calm. It benefits children who are overactive, aggressive or pseudo-mature.

- Cotton ball or feather guess: using two similar feeling items (a make up brush and cotton pad will do for example instead of a cotton ball and feather if you don't have them), ask your child to close their eyes while you touch them somewhere on visible skin. Can they guess which item touched them? This needs to feel safe, playful and fun. It should be a quieter and relaxing activity. Try not to tickle as that can over excite children.
- Pretend face / body paint: using soft brushes or cotton wool again, pretend to paint your child's face / hand / foot. Ask them what they would like to be painted as. Talk about the pretend colours you are using. Again, this should feel relaxing and soothing.
- Lotion: gently apply lotion and give a gentle hand massage. You could do with feet also.
- Hand / footprints: Using child's paint, make handprint pictures, fingerprints pictures or even footprint pictures. Try to increase the amount of touch as this is part of nurture (if your child will accept / enjoy it as part of the activity). There are some lovely ideas for hand / footprint pictures online or on Pinterest.
- Blanket swing: this requires two adults. Ask your child to lie on their backs in the middle of the blanket. Slowly pick them up by each adult lifting two corners of the blanket. Gently swing them singing a song such as 'Twinkle Twinkle'. Try to keep some eye contact. Again, this should be calm and slow rather than an activity to excite.
- Feeding: Sit closely with your child sharing a snack or drink. You could feed each other or feed your child. Listen for crunches or other eating noises. You could have a few different snacks, ask your child to close their eyes and see if they can guess which one they have been given (nuts, fruit, crisps etc). Listen to some calm music together.





Challenge

Challenge is about enabling children to feel competent, to develop confidence and self-efficacy, the feeling that they can achieve things. It benefits children who are withdrawn, timid or rigid.

- **Balancing activities:** Have your child lie on their back with their feet together in the air, can they balance a cushion on their feet? How many can they balance? Can they kick them off when you say 'Ready, steady go'? How far can they kick them? You can do lots of balancing activities such as balancing hats and seeing how far the child can walk before they fall off.
- **Balloon tennis:** how many balloon passes can you do together before the balloon falls? Can you beat your own score?
- **Crawling race:** make a stack of cushions in the middle of the floor, have a crawling race, can you catch your child's foot before they catch yours? Give a 'Ready, steady, go' signal.
- **Pillow push:** Hold a pillow or cushion in front of you, can your child push you over? This needs to be kept playful and be careful not to use with over excited children who may struggle with safety in this activity.
- **Pick up cotton balls:** Start with two cotton balls or similar sized objects. Can your child pick them up with their feet? How many can they pick up at once? With younger children, ask them to pick them up and drop them into your hands one at a time.
- **Shoe and sock race:** Race with your child to see who can put on / take off their socks and shoes first. Keep it playful rather than competitive.
- **Straight face challenge:** Ask your child to try to keep their face straight while you try to make them laugh. How long can they do it for?

