

Free & Fun Games

To Promote Attachment & Emotional Regulation With Your Children

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These games can help to calm children, and should be taught first during calm, neutral times. They teach children how to go from active to still, promoting emotion regulation skills. They can also promote closeness between children and parents.

For all of these free and easy movement games, use your best judgment about whether your children are at the right developmental stage to engage in this type of play. All kids are different, and you know your children best! These games can be played with 1 or multiple children.

Growing Seeds

1. Children roll up in to a tight ball on the floor, pretending to be seeds.
2. Tell mini stories about plants growing, springtime, etc.
3. Adult mimics “watering” the children as seeds. Make sound effects.
4. The children slowly grow up in to flowers or trees.
5. Encourage children to reach for the sun.
6. Simulate seasons: grow tall in summer, blow in the wind in fall, lightening and rain in winter, petals/leaves fall off and seed goes back to the earth, grows again in spring.

Milkshake

1. Children pretend to be blenders. Talk about how blenders make milkshakes, etc.
2. The parent/caregiver is in the middle of children, and is the “outlet/plug.”
3. Children “plug in” to parent, by reaching out an arm (cord) and touching a shoulder or arm to plug in.
4. Parent spends silly time with children picking out milkshake ingredients and “putting them in” to the blender. The point here is giggles & imagination.
5. Parent “turns on” blender by gently pushing/tapping the child’s belly, or whatever part of body that feels comfortable.
6. Children shake and wiggle, simulating the blending of the milkshake.
7. Parent spends time turning the blender off and on, “tasting” the milkshake, etc.

Spaghetti

1. Establish that children are uncooked spaghetti noodles, and the middle area of the floor is the “pot” of boiling water.
2. Talk about how stiff spaghetti noodles are when uncooked. Have children stand as stiffly as they can.
3. Explain that noodles loosen up and get wobbly as they cook. When the water in the “pot” is ready, tell them they will jump in and start to cook. They will wiggle and wobble in the “pot,” eventually falling to the ground. Then you will check to see if the noodles are done.

4. Explain that a cooked noodle is floppy. Children as noodles should be on the floor now that they've cooked. You come around to check if they are "done" by gently lifting a leg off the floor, or arm off the floor, etc. Children get to decide if they are done or not.
5. If child/noodle is "done," their limbs will flop back to the ground with a thud. If they need to cook more, their limbs will be stiff and hard to lift. Children typically love this part of the game.
6. Inevitably, the "noodles" will need to cook longer, so all the children/noodles jump back in to the pot. Do this over and over until children decide they are cooked and floppy.
7. Ask children what type of pasta they want to be. Kids like to be silly and/or gross about what they add (i.e., unconventional pasta toppings). Mimic throwing in ingredients and stirring the noodles. Then "taste" the pasta and make appropriate faces, etc.

Yoga with props

1. Whether you decide to call it "yoga" or not, lay on your back with children.
2. Place pillows, stuffed animals or any soft objects on your bellies.
3. Explain that you want to see how much everyone can make the objects on their bellies move up and down through breathing. Bigger, longer breaths will make the objects move higher and lower.
4. If children are engaged, introduce counting with breath ("I will count to four, and you breath in while I'm counting," etc.)
5. If children are engaged, you can try any other forms of stretching that you like.
6. Imagination and play during this activity help keep children engaged ("the kitty on your belly loves going up and down! I can hear it purring!").

Make a storm

1. Everyone sits on the floor, if that's comfortable. If that's not comfortable, people can use the tops of their legs as the surface.
2. Explain that you are making a storm with your hands. You are the conductor of the storm. When your hand is low to the ground, the storm is very quiet and gentle, just starting. When your hand gets higher from the ground, the storm is growing louder and bigger to thunder and lightening.
3. Children respond to the movement of your hand, which you should move unpredictably from low to high. When the storm is gentle, children tap out the sound of raindrops on the floor. When the storm is big, children pound on the floor loudly, making thunder.