

## **Some games and activities to strengthen and enhance adult-child interactions (by no means an exhaustive or prescriptive list)- Linked to my Cleo the Crocodile and Taya the Tortoise Activity books.**

There are thousands of different activities and games, and these will vary for each child, their preferences, interests, stage, and the relationship; and it is acknowledged that some children might not be in the place yet to do some of these, so, other steps and bridging will have to happen first and being open to their interests and finding entry points. And of course they need to be able to choose, pass, opt out, adapt etc. Often it is the how we make them feel in these activities that is the most important aspect and element.

For some children who haven't experienced this or who might need more interactive nurturing experiences they might benefit from some of the activities or support offered in interventions such as Theraplay, filial play therapy, video interaction guidance intervention, play therapy amongst others. But some might include.

*As you go through think about which do you do already? Which might you like to do? Which would you add? What makes the child sparkle and light up? When are they at their happiest/best? What are some moments when you are really connecting and working together well?*

- Going for a walk-in nature (nature can be very calming and bonding). You could do a nature treasure hunt or eye spy; or make a natural obstacle course, build or decorate a fort, a bridge, or a den together. Also, for example, make a piece of art out of what you found on the walk. This might be making a nature collage, taking nature photos, making a nature name acronym, making animals out of pieces from nature, painting stones which you have found whilst out and about, painting with nature (e.g. Using a stick as a paint brush, making patterns with leaves or a pine cone), and/or doing tracings or rubbings such as with the tree bark or a leaf. You might also just enjoy and optimise being outdoors, for example, going for a walk, on a cycle, on a horse ride, playing an outdoors game together, or simply going to the park etc. This might also be doing activities of the time you have in nature such as, going fruit/vegetable picking, making perfumes from the flowers you found, planting and gardening.
- Drawing around each other's hands or feet and decorating them with pens, stickers, glitter etc. These hands could also be put together to make something, such as a hand tree (Photo) or hand animals. You could also make a 3D sculpt or mould of each other's hands (Photo), and then decorate them.
- Getting household items and making your own stamps (e.g. Using potatoes) and stencils (e.g. Using lids, toilet paper rolls, bubble wrap, egg boxes, corrugated card etc). Or you can make different designs on a piece of paper using the items which you found around the house. You can then paint, or spray paint these items leaving all sorts of colours, textures, and patterns.
- Decorating squares of card or material and making a "family/ strengths/ identity/hobbies" patchwork, mural, collage, sign, banner, badge, shield/crest, or poster.

- Drawing, moulding, making, or sculpting a self/family portrait; or a positive portrait of each other. This could also be making a family portrait using animals or photos.
- Putting different splodges of paint onto a piece of paper, and then folding the paper over, and then opening it up to reveal what patterns it has made; or blowing colourful paint bubbles using a straw around a piece of paper and seeing what shapes are made.
- Making gloop, slime, or aroma dough together. This is even better if calming aromas are added to them, such as, lavender. This can also be a lovely sensory activity.
- Making sensory bottles or rain sticks together. There could be different ones for different moods, like one with rice, glitter, feathers, elastic bands, glow in the dark etc.
- Making, colour-in, or decorating something functional together, like a tent/tepee, a tablecloth, a lamp, a picture frame, or a toy box.
- Making an item for the other person to keep, like a special stone, a piece of jewellery, a special box, a picture etc. You can also use household items, like making a necklace out of pasta shapes or pipe cleaners.
- Doing completion games. These are when you or the child, for example, starts a story with a line, and then you take turns to each write a line of the story. You can also do this with drawing a picture, and the other person completes or adds to the picture (this can be done in front of each other, or it can be fun to reveal what everyone has written or drawn at the end). To make this more sensory, one person can draw a line, and the other person can add to it by using Play-Doh or plasticine.
- Choreographing a dance together, doing a play together, writing a song/ poem together, or putting on a puppet show.
- Decorating each other's face with stickers or by face painting. You could also make different masks or decorate different glasses/ hats.
- Cooking or baking something together. You can also decorate things like biscuits, pizzas, or cakes with feelings faces on them.
- Playing follow the leader or "Simon says" inspired games. You can do this using different body movements, facial expressions, tongue-twisters, singing songs, drumming rhythms, clapping, or humming. For example, one person does a rhythm with their hands, and the others follow the rhythm and so forth.
- Together trying to keep a balloon up in the air and trying to stop it from falling on the floor. It can be fun to start this with both hands, and then after a few minutes, to change it to keep the balloon up but without using hands (so can use elbows, legs, heads etc). Or blowing bubbles, feathers, or sweets (using a straw) back and forth to each other can be fun, regulating, and relational.

- Using toilet paper or other household materials to make an outfit for the other person to wear.
- A wonderful trust game can be when you take it in turns to be blind folded and sensitively lead the other person successfully around a room/obstacle course etc. Please note though this can be scary for various reasons, so, it needs to be done at the right time and with care, and only with the child/adult's consent and want. Similarly, another trust game, is where the child falls back and is caught by the supporting adult-again, they need to want to do this, and be in the right place.
- Dancing together, watching a movie together, or reading a book together. Stories can be a very powerful way of strengthening attachments- existing ones or making your own.
- Playing a turn-taking board game like playing Jenga, Charades, Pictionary, or Connect-4; or for younger children it might be something like hide and seek or peek a boo.
- Although the concept and extent of touch varies and needs to be thought about carefully due to relationships, cultural factors, and children's previous experience of touch, and how their bodies were treated. It can be bonding, where appropriate and with consent, to find different ways to show and encourage "safe" touching within the context of a healthy and healing relationship, as well as feel-good and nice body experiences. This might be through activities such as: dancing, belly laughing, hand palm dancing, massaging hands, painting each other's faces, finger painting, hand printing, tracing each other's hands, plaiting each other's hair or painting each other's nails, playing games such as twister, making shapes on each other's backs, cooking or baking together, messy play, water play, or playing games like "This Little Piggy", "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes", "Popping Cheeks", or "Pat-A-Cake". Sometimes also having different physical experiences that are freeing, healing, liberating, fun etc. These will vary for different people but might include things like swimming, dancing, drumming, yoga, cycling, climbing etc.