



Suggested Activities

Attachment Play

This is a special kind of play which needs to be interactive to strengthen connections. It should often involve laughter and can be child or adult initiated. You do not require special equipment and this can take place anywhere, anytime.

Familiar Activities Include...

Playful Copycat (or Mirroring the Child)

The basic idea for this activity is to have the adult playfully copy what the child is doing, such as by having the child begin by clapping his hands together and having the parent clap their hands in the same volume and speed as the child. When the child changes his style of clapping (such as louder or softer), the parent should imitate the child. Eye contact, smiles, and laughs are also helpful to promote a healthy relationship and repair or enhance attachment. Mirroring can also be done with other activities, such as jumping, playing with toys, or facial expressions. If the child is struggling for ideas then you can change the leader and model some simple movements for the child to copy.

Bean Bag Game

Have the child place a bean bag or another soft toy that is fairly easy to balance on top of their head. Have the parent sit in front of the child and place their hands out in front. The child is then asked to tip his head forward to try to get the bean bag in the parent's hands. The child should tip his head when the parent blinks her eyes. (This will promote eye contact.) Have the parent use as much eye contact as possible. Again, it is important for the parent and child to have fun with this activity. Laughter has been found to be healing and can help to repair and enhance a relationship.

Piggy-Back Rides

Piggy-back rides can help to strengthen adult-child relationships and repair or enhance attachment because they involve fun and physical closeness. An alternative may be a wheelbarrow race or singing row, row, row your boat facing each other holding hands and touching feet/knees.



Back Drawing

Using a finger draw letters, numbers or shapes on the back of a child to see if they can guess what they feel. If this is too difficult, just take your finger for a walk across their back, adjusting the speed and pressure. The sensory feeling can relax a person's physical body by reducing tension and bringing the brain into a less defensive state.

Brushing Hair

Sometimes children can be fussy about getting their hair brushed, especially if they have experienced pain from well-meaning parents brushing their hair too hard. This can be a calming activity that includes a sense of nurturing which connects to a person's internal experience of attachment and bonding. Alternatively use a variety of brushes and soft toys/dolls or small rocking horse to groom.

Symbolic Play

This useful to deal with trauma. It is an important milestone in young children's play and is a natural process that is crucial for a child's healthy development. Symbolic play is a type of play that young children engage in, where they use an object or toy to represent something else. Here are some more symbolic play examples:

- a box becomes a shopping trolley
- a block that "becomes" the phone used to call the fire brigade
- a small milk carton becomes a toadstool
- some chairs and a blanket are transformed into a tent
- bricks become cars
- a washing basket becomes a boat with wooden spoons as oars
- a skipping rope becomes a fireman's hose or snake

Separation Games

Some can be played at the moment of separation, others are great in preparation for a separation, or to reconnect afterwards.

Peek a boo – is a classic one to play with babies to help them understand about object permanence – that when we go away we will come back._



I hope you don't pull me back – When we leave we can invite the child to play simply by telling them what we hope they won't do, in a playful tone. So we might say, "I'm just going to go out the door now, I hope nobody tries to pull me back in." Let the child grab us by the arm and pull us back into the room. We can fling ourselves back in and land on the sofa for extra cuddles goodbye.

Wrong coat, wrong shoes – Play listening is really very simple. We don't need to be an award winning comedian. Our child will love it if we just make some silly mistakes So try to put on daddy's coat, or your child's shoes, and then say, "oh whoops, silly me, that's not right!" You could also try leaving while still in your pyjamas or a towel after just stepping out of the shower.

Going the wrong way – Get all ready to leave, and then go the wrong way. Open the bathroom or bedroom or even a cupboard door. Then say, "oh hang on, that's not how I leave the house is it? Now where is that front door?" Ask them to show you the way to the lunch hall or playground or classroom.

She's/He's mine – Hand in Hand, one parent/carer takes hold of the child, and says, "she's/he's mine!" Then the other one tries to take the child, and playfully 'pulls' them away, saying "no, she's/he's mine!" Having a playful tug of war with their child, allowing them to soak up lots of warm, loving connection with both adults can work to make the child feel wanted by both and laugh/relax.

Social Stories

Social stories are a great way of getting information across in a simple and concise way. Visuals help children to remember, and to apply. Try websites such as [Social Stories | SEN Resource Source](#) which has a wide range of social stories for children and young people. Stories include topics as vast as visiting a supermarket or dentist, to parental divorce and turn taking.

Circle Time

'Pass the Squeeze' - passing a soft toy around to give a giant hug to or playing 'Zoom/Zap' - pass a toy car around the circle with children saying Zoom to keep it driving in that direction but if they say 'Zap' then the car has to change direction. (You may need to limit them to only one Zap each, to avoid the car staying only between two pupils)

[\(2022\) Circle Time Activities & Ideas for Early Years & Preschoolers | Kids Club HQ](#)



The Power of Puppets

Create a puppet show with bought or handmade puppets. A simple idea is to make a sock puppet - children can draw faces/discuss emotions. Use stick on eyes or glue on buttons to create funny faces.

Create role play area using a puppet theatre.

Allow children to play with puppets on a regular basis, to give them an opportunity to explore language and discuss things in a less formal way.

Memory Games

Kim's game - Place different objects on a table, cover with a cloth. Ask children to remember the options. Discuss which strategies they used, e.g. story to remember, visualisation or rows/corners. Try again with different items and then remove one to see if they can spot what's missing etc.

Pairs - card games. Start this by making it really easy e.g. with only 4 cards (two matching pairs), gradually increasing the difficulty by adding more pair at a time. Model and discuss strategies for remembering what is where.

I flew to the moon – Children are to remember what has been said previously, e.g. I flew to the moon and with me I took a space suit, I flew to the moon and with me I took a space suit and some biscuits....

Language Games

Rhyming songs, storytelling, playing Simon says or learning how to tell simple jokes.

Describe me 'Feely Bags' - You need some type of bag (cloth works well) to place the objects so they cannot be seen. Next, collect everyday items from around the house, such as a crayon, a spoon, a wooden block etc Place all the pieces into the bag. Lastly, your child is going to put their hand into the bag, feel one of the items without looking, and then describe it to you until you can guess what it is.

Role Play

Role play activities which include dressing up, supermarket, doctor, vet, hairdressers, cafe, butchers etc. or acting out a story. Fairy tales or the Julia Donaldson Stories are great to use as a base for re-enacting the story and all playing a character to create a mini performance.



Useful Links

[Better Movers and Thinkers - scaffolding practices | Learning resources | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](#) - Simple, practical and fun activities to improve coordination, thinking, listening and communication skills.

[Inside Out update \(calmerclassrooms.co.uk\)](#) Free Mindfulness Lesson Plan Linked to Disney's film 'Inside Out'

[www.risingstars-uk.com](#) Superstars books

[31 Fun Parachute Games and Activities for Kids | Kid Activities](#) - Parachute games for all ages. Used to encourage participation and working with others.

[Blob Shop - Home of the Blob Tree Communication Tools. | blobshop](#) - Blob tree resources, a visual representation of young people's feelings. A safe and quiet area is paramount.

[What Is A Social Story? - Carol Gray - Social Stories \(carolgraysocialstories.com\)](#) - Useful information about what social stories are and how to apply them.

[Nurture Groups | SEN Resource Source](#) - Lots of useful resources to help set up a nurture group.

[THE INCREDIBLE 5-POINT SCALE - HOME \(5pointscale.com\)](#)

<https://beaconhouse.org.uk/resources/>

[www.relaxkids.com](#)

[Teaching resources - Tes](#)

[Free primary and secondary school teaching resources - BBC Teach](#)

[BBC One - The Blue Planet](#)

[Resources | Mindful Kids \(mindful-kids.co.uk\)](#)

[Parents and Non-Directive Play: Reducing Anxiety in Young Children \(alongsideyou.ca\)](#)

[We're Going on a Bear Hunt | A Cosmic Kids Yoga Adventure! - Bing video](#)

[The Very Hungry Caterpillar | A Cosmic Kids Yoga Adventure! - Bing video](#)

[Underwater Tropical fish, Coral reefs, Sea Turtles, Beautiful Relaxing Music - Bing video](#)



[Please and Thank You Song + More Nursery Rhymes & Kids Songs - CoComelon - Bing video](#)

[Old Macdonald Had A Farm More Nursery Rhymes and Kids Songs | Little Baby Bum - Bing video](#)

[CBeebies | Something Special | Learn Makaton Signs - Bing video](#)

[Learn to sign School | Mr Tumble 🎓👤👤👤👤 - Bing video](#)

[Mr Tumble Happy and Sad - Bing video](#)

[Faces and Feelings | BookTrust](#)

[Sensory Play - Action for Healthy Kids](#)

<https://open.spotify.com/show/3Hfu2ZF6pzSsdf9LfhNj3q> - The Nurture Podcast by Katie Dobson & Lynsey Madonia. Free nurture training, also accessible via work devices here: <https://anchor.fm/katielynsey>

[What Happened to You?: Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing eBook : Winfrey, Oprah: Amazon.co.uk: Books](#) – Excellent CPD to inform knowledge about the impacts of trauma.

[Numicon, Primary School Maths Resources \(oup.com\)](#)

[Sensory Circuits - Childrens Choice Therapy](#)