



Connecting Games

These games help children learn the value of playing in ways that are intentionally healthy, promoting prosocial behaviors. Children who are intrinsically motivated to connect with others feel socially and emotionally secure, promoting prosocial behaviors, becoming cooperative, and becoming important members of society.

These connecting games tap into the Happy Trio + One (Dopamine, Serotonin, Endorphins, and Oxytocin*).

Dopamine is instrumental in creating “feel good” because it gives us a sense of reward and fulfillment. It is our reward neurotransmitter.

It increases:

- Memory
- Attention span
- Regulation of cognition and behavior
- Sleep and wake regulation
- Mood stabilizer
- Learning and retention

Serotonin is instrumental in creating healthy bodies and brain development because it acts like a hormone.

- Mood stabilizer
- Sleep regulation
- Digestion (90% is found in the lining of your gastrointestinal tract)
- Regulates appetite
- Increases learning
- Increases happiness

Endorphins are known to be “pain killer” because it reduces stress, and improve mood.

- Eases feelings of loneliness and depression
- Improve self-perception and image
- Regulates appetite
- Increase sense of self-efficacy and empowerment

***Oxytocin** is instrumental in creating loving relationships because it is bonding with others as it increases the feelings of trust and attachment.

- Increases bonding with loved ones
- Trust and security



My Hand is Stuck!

This game begins by gently placing one hand on your child in a playful way. You say first what you will be doing because this builds trust and predictability.

YOU Say:

“My hand is going to get stuck on your elbow” Pretend your hand is stuck on the child and you cannot move it until they find the “magic button” which can be winky the eyes, or saying I love you I love you I love you (3 times), or finding the “magic button” on you. This could be your nose or your right ear, etc.

YOU Say:

“I wonder if the magic button is here?” Squeeze the child’s thumb. “No, it is not there” Continue to struggle to find that button until both of you are giggling. You can put one finger on their head and simultaneously freeing your stuck hand.

What did you bring home from school today?

This game is great to greet the child back home from school or welcoming the child back into the classroom.

YOU Say:

What did you bring home from school today?” Then begin to take inventory of their things like their heads, feet, nose, hair, etc.

YOU Say:

“Oh I see you brought your head and thumb back from school”

The focus here is to connect with the child by seeing them and playfully touching them.

*I do not recommend focusing on material things since we want to emphasize that they are important beings and they are exactly who they need to be.

Hello Foot

This game is simply to be silly and delightful. Children love being silly so why not be silly with them?

YOU Say:

“Hello, it is wonderful to see you”. Then begin to get silly by shaking their foot, their elbow, their ear, nose, etc. You want to gently shake one body part as if it was like hand shaking.