Managing Meltdowns

Playful Survival Strategies

MereAnn Reid | Play Therapist
- Brains
- Super Powers
- Playful Resets
- Sensory Tools
Develops Third Cortical Brain
Thinking, learning, language and inhibiting

Develops Second Limbic Brain
Attachment and emotional development

Develops First Brainstem (Primitive Brain)
Sensory motor input and survival
Brainstem
Lizard Brain

Sensory Motor Input + Survival
Attachment

Limbic Brain

Anger + Distress

Worry + Fear
Hand Model of Brain

Daniel Siegel, MD
Co-Author of The Whole Brain Child
BUILD YOUR attachment sandwich
Secure Base
Distress
Sweet Relief
Safe Haven

“Perhaps home is not a place but simply an irrevocable condition.”
— James Baldwin, American author & playwright
To a 4-yr-old child, a chair is a castle, a race car, a secret cave.
To an adult, it’s just a chair. Both ways matter.

Let play be possible

From Life is a Verb, Patti Digh, 2008
“Therapeutic interventions must be able to impact the child’s brain at the level of the disorganizing trauma”

“Children need a concrete way to cope with their world... play is the concrete expression that can bring better understanding”

Garry Landreth, PhD, (2012) Child-centered play therapist
Play...

1) Mimics common, important, purposeful behavior

2) Voluntary, pleasurable, no explicit survival role or “purpose”

3) Takes place in non-threatening, low-duress context

Burghardt (2005)
Play Helps

- Practice Skills
- Distract
- Find Allies
- Set Boundaries
- Test Limits
- Energy Outlet
- Reduce Stress
- Establish Roles
Why won’t they behave?!

- Kids who feel safe & connected maintain manageable arousal
- A “flipped lid” needs an anchor
- Out-of-bounds = overwhelmed

* What signals did we miss?
* How do we stay calm?
The Window of Tolerance: Edges of Growth

by Kimberly Bevans, June 17, 2013 in Anxiety, Mind/Body Therapy
Super Powers

- Build Independence
- Regulate Behavior
- Build Trust
- Communicate Needs + Limits
- Manage Nervous System
- Establish Safety
- Reinforce Security
- Balance risk & reward
- Balance risk & reward
Disconnection is normal
37% attunement
63% rupture + repair
# Move into Window of Tolerance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breathing</td>
<td>Feather blow</td>
<td>Feather sort with straws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bubbles</td>
<td>Temporary Tattoos</td>
<td>Blanket Swing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smell/blow soup</td>
<td>Mirroring Games</td>
<td>Water Beads</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blow out candles</td>
<td>Yoga</td>
<td>Hiding/Finding in sand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cotton ball blow</td>
<td>Weather Report</td>
<td>Sensory play in sand</td>
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</tbody>
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Thank you to Robyn Gobbel, LCSW (2017)
Still Face Experiment

Dr Edward Tronick
1) Lower brain responds to environment

2) Relational trauma sparks low brain activity

3) Rational brain doesn’t manage emotions

4) Upper brain reacts more slowly

5) Trauma results in abnormal organizing

6) Trauma impacts areas under construction

Feeding regulates

Sucking
• Applesauce pouch

Crunching
• Pretzel stack
• Goldfish toss

Chewing
• Fruit gummies
• Dried fruit

Sweet
• M & M’s
• Jelly Belly flavors
Sensory Tools

Routine + Breaks

Novelty interrupts arousal

Soothing feel-good items

Rhythmic, repetitive, patterned

Connection + safety bust stress