



HELPING YOUR CHILD REGULATE BY USING PLAY

In my clinic, there is a common theme, many parents attend when their child is either anxious, hyperactive angry, clumsy, jerky, watchful and even shut down. This can be for all kinds of reasons, stressful pregnancy, birth trauma, postnatal depression, childhood illness. Often, Children who present like this need to make connections to their body and mind unless your child can understand there is a connection to their bodily responses, feelings and behaviour, we call this emotional dysregulation.

1

If a child struggles to Self Soothe(regulate). They may well feel this in their body, and sometimes feel panicky, have headaches or they may be really hyperactive or shut down. In order to help them to reconnect with their body, we know that touch can help. Touch is one of the earliest forms of sensory awareness, so it's important that you provide your child with lots of opportunities. So give your child a boost of love/happy chemical oxytocin by massaging their feet or hands. Some children need deep pressure so experiment.

2

Water play is soothing. Most of us are familiar with the relaxing effects of a bath. You can use the soothing effects of water whether at the sink, in the sea, it is a good excuse to be close. Some children I worked with, do not express themselves verbally until they have saturated themselves in water play.

3

Clay, I love clay, its wonderful messy, soft, mushy and can appeal to very age. It's very malleable and you can make almost anything with it. It offers a tactile and kinesthetic experience, great for anxiety and for anger, you can push, bash and more.

4

Set up a self-soothe box, this is something we use in DBT, Dialectal Behaviour Therapy Lineham 1993) Help them to choose lots of soft materials such as silk fabrics, feathers, soft teddies, smooth precious stones, music anything that will help them feel calm. We use this at work for adolescents too. The idea is to go to the box when they are not stressed and touch, experience every object and what it's like in their bodies to feel calm, Remember to change a behaviour we need to give them options to do something else. Children who are dysregulated are often uncomfortable in their bodies, they can often seem jerky or clumsy.

5

Lastly, help them to be mindful. Start with a toy (its less threatening) Let your child hold the toy/object for a minute or more for an older child. While they are holding it ask them to touch it, squeeze it etc, the idea is to use as many sense as they can. Then ask them to describe it.

You can follow this by using the raisin exercise. Ask them to eat a raisin and then ask what they noticed. This can help any child start to begin to be aware of their bodies and know how it feels to be calm.

Happy Playing, Love Catherine