

# Connected Play

## What is Connected Play?

Spending approximately 10 minutes a day through connected play with your child allows them to feel safe during very tumultuous times. As our children face the dangers of increased risk while attending school each day, they become hypervigilant and on guard in order to keep themselves safe in case threat is near.

Connected play offers a set amount of time each day for a caregiver to create what we call “felt safety” where your child does not have to be hypervigilant or on guard. “Felt-safety” is a term defined by Dr. Karyn Purvis and Dr. David Cross, creators of Trust Based Relational Intervention® out of TCU, that has to do with feeling safe vs actual safety. Because of our children’s experiences at school, they may not feel safe in certain situations even though it may technically safe. By spending this time investing into our children, we give them connection and a sense of feeling safe when the world around them feels unsafe.

## Strategies for Connected Play

Using the Engagement Strategies created by Trust Based Relational Intervention®, we focus on these strategies during connected play.

- Playful eye contact: non-threatening eye contact to connect with one another
- Voice quality: use a playful upbeat voice, not a stern or loud voice
- Playful interaction: play is the language of kids, so be playful in your interactions
- Behavior matching: mirror what your child is doing. I.e., if they are building a castle with Legos, you build a castle with Legos. Take an interest in what you child is interested in, even if it means stretching yourself a bit!
- Healthy touch: looks for playful ways to create with healthy touch. I.e., fist bumps, high fives, hugs. We know that healthy touch releases dopamine and other “feel good” neurochemicals.



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## When to engage in connected play?

Whether you are playing Legos, discussing K-pop, the NBA draft, or swinging on a swing set, find time in your day that is devoted to playful engagement with your child to help counterbalance the fear state that most of our children are living in when they go to school.

Sometimes this has to be done while in the car, bath time, in between events, but you can take any moment and turn it into an opportunity to connect through playful engagement.

## What to avoid during connected play

Things to NOT do during connected play:

1. No teaching
2. No instructing



This should be time led by your child to engage over something they enjoy doing. Not a time to instruct or teach how to do something better or different.

Play disarms fear, so by creating a playful and safe environment for your child, you can help offer safety to them when they might not feel safe otherwise.

## More Resources

We also have family navigators who can help Monday – Friday during regular business hours:

- Help Me Grow for families with children ages 0-6 contact 844-NTX-KIDS
- Help Me Thrive for ages 6-18 contact 844-NTX-TEEN



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