

# The importance of play when children are anxious or fearful



## THE POWER OF PLAY

Children have experienced the disruption and fear created by the pandemic and are now seeing images of war and destruction across the globe. Playing, particularly shared play, is linked to wellbeing and reducing stress in adults and children. Shared play releases hormones and chemicals in the brain and body that support strong positive relationships and leave us feeling less anxious and aggressive. At a time when fear and anxiety are high, play provides an opportunity for family connection.

## TYPES OF PLAY



### PHYSICAL

Jumping, climbing, dancing, and skipping are really important for using up energy that may come from stress.



### IMAGINATIVE PLAY

Role play such as tea parties, superheroes or shopkeepers can help children to make sense of experiences and to escape from a frightening reality.



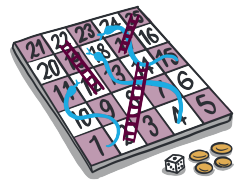
### FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Drawing, creating, baking, building, cutting and sticking. Becoming absorbed in activity can help children move away from their worries and provide respite and welcome relief from their preoccupation and fear.



### ROUGH AND TUMBLE

Chasing, grappling and wrestling safely together can be a vital part of reducing and controlling aggression.



### RULE-BASED

Hide and seek, treasure hunts, board games, card games and I-spy. Games such as this require children to actively engage, and this gives them energy and lust for life and keeps them hopeful.

## PLAY AS TIME TO CONNECT

Playing together can also provide opportunities for important conversations that allow children to make sense of their experiences and voice fears and worries with an adult they trust.