
Bringing a Trauma-Sensitive Focus to Children's Active Play

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the article, "Bringing a Trauma-Sensitive Focus into Children's Active Play," by the Sport Information Resource Centre. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Understand the ways that active play and gross motor experiences support children who experienced trauma.
- ◆ Reflect upon the current supports and determine new strategies to support children.
- ◆ Create an action plan for using the SEPRR approach as you design a trauma-sensitive response to supporting children in your classroom.

Activity

- ◆ Read the article.
- ◆ After reading, use the questions below to guide your reflection and action plan to support children who have experienced trauma through gross motor movements and active play.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support gross motor skills.

"... physical activity can be used as an effective means to restore bodily regulation and feelings of control for those exposed to trauma."

Maji Shaikh, Corliss Bean, and Lou Bergholz

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the article? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?

- ◆ The article highlights some of the positive effects of gross motor movements on children exposed to trauma. These include restoring a sense of control in one's feelings or body, decreasing stress, increasing their ability to self-regulate, building a sense of physical competency, and supporting focus and attention.
 - Consider how you feel when you exercise, get outdoors, or engage in physical activity. How do your emotions, feelings, or thoughts change before and after you've done so?
 - Have you observed changes in children's behavior before and after gross motor activities? What changes have you noticed?
 - How can these observations be used to design active play experiences that support children who have been exposed to trauma?

- ◆ Reflect upon the strategies and supports that you use in your learning environment. Do these strategies include gross motor activities and/or opportunities for active play?
 - Consider how you currently use gross motor activities and active play to:
 - Foster a sense of safety and engagement.
 - Build body awareness and physical competency.
 - Facilitate engaging activities to help children stay present.
 - How can you incorporate gross motor movements to create a trauma-informed play experience that supports the children in your classroom?

- ◆ It's important to use a trauma-sensitive lens when intervening and supporting a child in times of dysregulation, or stress. The article suggests using the SEPRR approach to help the child regulate themselves in-the-moment through movement experiences.
 - Consider the children in your classroom. Who can benefit from your support?
 - Using the SEPRR approach, create a plan for supporting a child through this trauma-sensitive lens.
 - What active play or gross motor strategies and activities can you use to help **stabilize** their emotions and get them ready to **explore** what happened?
 - Prepare alternative activities for the child as they **plan** to work through and/or avoid triggers in the future.
 - Provide support as they **rejoin** the activity and **restore** their sense of bodily control, awareness, strength, and pride.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about supporting children's gross motor skills:

- ◆ **Source:** The Washington Post
 - ◆ **Article:** Why More Kids Are Learning – And Enjoying – Yoga
 - ◆ **Link:** https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/why-more-kids-are-learning--and-enjoying--yoga/2020/01/03/1f2b78be-de32-11e9-8dc8-498eabc129a0_story.html
 - ◆ **Description:** Learn more about the benefits of gross motor activities, specifically yoga, on children's self-regulation skills. This activity offers links to additional resources throughout to support children's love and learning of yoga.
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- ◆ **Source:** Sesame Street in Communities
 - ◆ **Website:** The Monster Dash: A Story About Resiliency and Flexibility
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/resilience/?activity=monster-dash>
 - ◆ **Description:** This story about Karli, a Sesame Street character who has experienced trauma, demonstrates how gross motor activities can teach us to be flexible and resilient.