PLAY BREAKS

PLAY TO DISCOVER & MANAGE EMOTIONS

Children experience big emotions every day, but learning to understand and manage them takes time and practice. Play offers a natural & safe way for children to explore feelings, express what's inside, and learn how to cope with the everyday emotional ups & downs. This section includes simple, playful ideas designed to help children do just that.



MIRROR EMOTIONS

Stand face-to-face and mirror each other's facial expressions. Take turns leading and copying.

Why it helps
Builds emotional recognition and empathy.

Parent tip
Make it playful with silly expressions too.

2-3 min

Emotional Play



TOY TAKES A BREAK

Pretend a toy feels overwhelmed, angry, or sad. Together, help it calm down or cheer up, breathing, stretching, resting or telling it a story.

Why it helps
Teaches self-regulation strategies.

Parent tip
Use the same calming tools you'd suggest to your child.

2-3 min

Emotional Play



EMOTION CHARADES

Act out a feeling using only your body.
The other person guesses the emotion.

Why it helps
Strengthens emotional awareness and nonverbal communication.

Parent tip
Keep it light: laughter helps make feelings safer.

5-10 min

Emotional Play



TOY RESCUE

If a toy "breaks" (or pretends to be sick or had a very bad day), work together to "fix" it with a hug, a tissue "bandage," or singing a lullaby.

Why it helps
Practises empathy and nurturing behaviour toward others.

Parent tip
Model gentle touch and soothing words that your child can later use for themselves.

10 min

Emotional Play



HOW IS MY TOY FEELING?

Place a few small toys in front of your child. Take turns choosing a toy and saying how it feels today and why.

Why it helps
Builds emotional awareness and vocabulary.

Connection tip
Model simple emotions first (happy, sad, worried).

10-15 min

Emotional Play



GUESS MY EMOTION

Write emotions on 15–20 cards and place them face down. Each player clips a card to their headband without looking. Your child and you take turns asking yes-or-no questions to guess the emotion. If they guess correctly, they keep the card. The player with the most cards wins.

Why it helps
Builds emotional recognition and empathy.

Parent tip
Make it playful with fun emotions too.

30 min

Emotional Play

PLAY BREAKS

EVERYDAY PLAY MOMENTS

You don't need a big space, or a perfect plan to play with your child. Play can live in the small moments you already share throughout the day. This section is full of fun, simple ideas for everyday play breaks that fit your daily routines: during mornings, mealtimes, waiting in line, bedtime routines, and everything in between.



WAKE-UP FACES
(Morning Routines)

Greet each other in the morning with the same silly or emotional face (e.g., You can set it up the night before: Agree together on what the first morning face will be. "Let's do a sleepy turtle that is getting up").

Why it helps
Builds emotional connection and sets a positive tone.

Connection tip
Let your child choose the face for the next day.

1-2 min

Everyday Play Time



GUIDE ME THERE

On a familiar walk (to the car or the park), let your child be the "GPS." They tell you when to turn left, right, stop, or go "turbo speed."

Why it helps
Encourages confidence and decision-making by letting children take the lead, while also developing spatial awareness and navigation skills.

Connection tip
If they lead you the "wrong" way on purpose, follow them for a few steps: the shared silliness is more important than the destination.

2-3 min

Everyday Play Time



BACKPACK SURPRISE

Add a small playful note, drawing, or challenge for your child to find in their school backpack or somewhere where they find it (e.g., inside their shoes, under their pillow, under their plate at breakfast, in a jacket pocket).

Why it helps
Creates emotional connection across the day.

Connection tip
Invite your child to surprise you next time.

2-3 min

Everyday Play Time



INVISIBLE BALL

Pretend to throw and catch an invisible ball, changing its size or weight.

Why it helps
Encourages imagination and cooperation.

Connection tip
Let your child change the rules.

2-5 min

Everyday Play Time



WHO AM I?

Hide a small toy behind your back and describe it with clues. Your child guesses which toy it is.

Why it helps
Builds listening and thinking skills.

Connection tip
Take turns being the describer and guesser.

5-10 min

Everyday Play Time



BE A MAGICIAN

Hold a steel ladle by the handle under your arm with the rounded side facing the audience. Lightly steady it with your fingertips, then slowly let go and move your hands around it to create the illusion that a metal sphere is floating in mid-air with no support.

Why it helps
Performing a trick in front of others helps children feel proud of themselves and more comfortable being seen and heard, building confidence and communication skills.

Parent tip
Keep the tone light and playful rather than performance-focused. Praise effort, not just success.

10-15 min

Everyday Play Time



WALKING STORIES
(while walking to/from school)

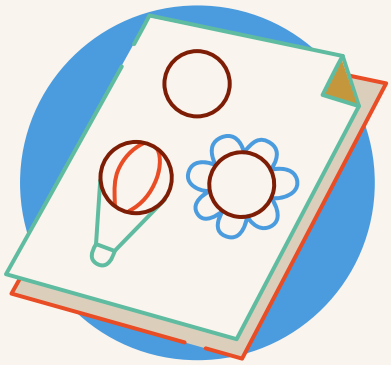
Create a story together, one sentence at a time while walking. Take turns to continue the story (e.g., “That dog we saw is actually a detective...”, “...who is looking for a missing cookie”).

Why it helps
Supports imagination and turn-taking.

Parent tip
Let the story go wherever your child leads.

5-10 min

Everyday Play Time



BE CREATIVE!

Draw 3-5 identical circles on a large sheet of white paper. Challenge your child to transform each circle into a different object using markers or crayons (e.g., different faces, fruits such as an orange, object such as a balloon or a clock).

Why it helps
Promotes divergent thinking, teaching children that a single starting point can lead to infinite possibilities.

Parent tip
You can start the drawing for your little ones, like adding the ears of a bear or the petals of a flower, and let them finish the coloring.

10-15 min

Everyday Play Time

PLAY BREAKS

PLAYING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

Family life can feel busy and full of routines, but when parents and children play together, something special happens: play becomes a shared space for laughter, communication and connection. This section is full of quick, easy play ideas that fit into real family life. Because family play is more than fun—it's a simple way to build lifelong emotional strength.



FAMILY GRATITUDE JAR

Each day, write or draw one thing you're grateful for and put it in a jar. Read them all together at the end of the week.

Why it helps
Builds positive connections and shared meaning.

Parent tip
Let your child decorate the jar.

2-5 min

Family Play Time



KITCHEN BAND

Use pots, spoons, and cups to create a family rhythm band.

Why it helps
Encourages cooperation, rhythm, and joy.

Parent tip
Let your child lead the tempo.

5-10 min

Family Play Time



SHADOW ON THE WALL

Using a flashlight or a phone light in a dimmed room, take turns using your hands or small toys to create shapes on the wall (e.g., create a bird shadow and flap your arms while tweeting, or shape a snake with your hands and hiss.

Why it helps
Sparks imagination and creates a calm, intimate environment for communication.

Parent tip
Ask "What does that shape look like to you?" and build a story around it.

5-10 min

Family Play Time



FAMILY HIGH-FIVE

Work together to invent a unique "secret" family high-five or handshake involving 3–4 different moves.

Why it helps
Creates a sense of belonging and a unique "family identity".

Parent tip
Use this handshake whenever you reunite after school or work to quickly reconnect.

5-10 min

Family Play Time



HUMAN MIRROR CHALLENGE

Draw a few simple "stick figures" on small pieces of paper, each in a different pose (one leg up, arms crossed, hands on the head, etc.). The adult picks a card, the child should quickly mirror the pose shown. Then switch roles.

Why it helps

Develops body awareness, balance & coordination as they try to match different positions. It also strengthens attention and observation skills.

Connection tip

Let your child be the "choreographer" and create their own complex stick-figure poses for you to try.

5-10 min

Family Play Time



FAMILY DANCE PARTY

Pick a song and dance together. Silly moves encouraged.

Why it helps

Creates shared joy and releases tension.

Parent tip

Let your child choose the songs leading the play.

5-10 min

Family Play Time



DRAW IT TOGETHER

Sit together with one large sheet of paper & some crayons or pencils. Take turns adding something to the same drawing (one detail at a time). There's no plan: the picture grows as you play together. You can turn it into a game by drawing without talking & guessing what the picture is becoming, or talking while drawing and telling a story.

Why it helps

Encourages cooperation, listening, self-expression and shared creativity.

Parent tip

Resist the urge to correct, follow your child's ideas & enjoy the process.

5-10 min

Family Play Time



TOY TALENT SHOW

(with Mini Home Theatre)

Create a theatre together, for example turning a cardboard box into a stage, or hanging a towel between two chairs. Each family member chooses a small toy (an animal, a car) & makes it perform on stage, singing, dancing, telling jokes, or doing something silly. Take turns being performer & audience.

Why it helps

Builds shared joy, creativity, communication, and confidence, encourages self-expression.

Connection tip

Follow your child's ideas & build on them.

15-20 min

Family Play Time