

1:1 RELATIONAL GAMES

FOR EDUCATION STAFF

It is vital for children and young people's (learners) emotional wellbeing, to feel connected to adults who can tune in to their emotions. Some children and young people may not have experienced this (for many reasons) which can lead to learners having difficulties in building relationships and expressing emotions.

We have developed a list of relational games for education staff to use to increase connection and build trust with learners. We have included brief instructions for each activity, and they require few resources. The activities and games can be utilised in either a one-to-one or group setting if appropriate. See our 'Group relational games' resources for more ideas.

"EVERY
INTERACTION
CAN BE AN
INTERVENTION"

Dr Karen Treisman
(Clinical Psychologist)

Relational games and activities aim to be:

FUN **playful** **engaging**

and adults and children and young people to **CONNECT AND BUILD RELATIONSHIPS.**

TOP TIPS

- **Consider the individual needs, abilities and preferences** of the learners you are supporting.
- Approach with **PACE as a way of being**: Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy. See our 'PACE for Education Staff' resource.
- Aim to **enjoy being together with a sense of joy and lightness** – it is not about the task itself.
- **Build confidence in playing with children of any age** – adapt activities to be more age appropriate if necessary.
- Remember that for some learners, their **emotional age is often younger than their chronological age**.
- **The adult is always in charge** – they set the limits and define clear boundaries in order to keep everyone safe.
- They can be very short activities, and so you can play a few different games in a row. **Short bursts of quality time are better** than longer times together with more distractions and disruptions.
- **Support and validate the anxiety they may feel initially** – particularly if connection is something new and unfamiliar.

DRUMMING

This activity can be done using musical percussion instruments like drums, household items such as pots/plastic bowls, or just by clapping hands or tapping thighs. The adult begins by drumming / clapping / tapping pots and the learner or group copies. You may start slow and get louder / faster, then go slow and quiet again. You can stop and make quick/sudden sounds. You can then switch so the learner leads. Rhythmic and repetitive sounds can help a child to feel more regulated, especially if timed at a resting heartbeat pace.



QUIZZES

The relational part of this is making a quiz together. You can research together, come up with topics. You can be the quiz masters together and test other staff members or they can ask their family.



READING AND STORYTELLING

Books, short stories or tales. Storytelling is a great way to connect and be with one another in playful way. Afterwards you can ask questions about the story. How did the story make them feel? How did the characters feel? Have you ever felt like the character in the story?

ZOOM-ERK



Sitting in a circle the word “zoom” is passed around the circle quickly. One person can stop the action by making the sound “Erk” (like a braking noise or screeching to a halt). The direction of the word “zoom” reverses and is sent back the way it came. The “zoom” continues to be sent around the group until an “erk” sound is made, and the game continues. The adult should model the “zoom” and “erk” first.

EYE SIGNALS

The adult and learner should stand facing each other. Use eye signals to indicate direction and number of steps to take, for example; when you wink your left eye twice, both of you should move to the left taking two steps. For older children, you can add signals for forwards and backwards also (head back for backwards, head forward for forwards).



COTTON WOOL FOOTBALL / HOCKEY / RUGBY



You will need a bag of cotton wool balls for this activity. The adult and learner stand at a table opposite each other, or sit on the floor facing each other. The adult should make football / rugby posts with the hands, and the learner attempts to flick or blow the cotton wool balls over or into the posts. You can then switch. Relational games shouldn't be competitive, so a way to avoid this might be to phrase it as “Let's see how many we can get in total” to encourage you working together as a team rather than against each other.

PIPE CLEANER ACCESSORIES

You will need a number of pipe cleaners for this activity. Both adult and learner create an accessory for the other person to wear. This can be; glasses, a crown, bracelet, necklace, moustache.

MUSICAL BUBBLES

Adult blows bubbles into the air while music is playing. The learner begins popping the bubbles and when the music stops they stop popping the bubbles. Have them pop the bubble with a particular body part, for example, finger, toe, elbow, shoulder, ear. Change up the game by having them pop them as quickly as they can.

SCAVENGER HUNT

The adult says to find a certain object. Both adult and learner go off quickly to find something, and then come back to the same spot to share it. This can be items in the classroom, or if you have space outdoors find natural objects. You can look at it together noticing all the different colors and shapes in it, get them to feel what textures it feels like, if it makes a sound if you listen to it, does it have a smell? You could make this into a relational activity by creating your own cards with these types of questions on, and then use those for your scavenger hunt or you can purchase packs of cards online.

FIND SOMETHING...

that makes you feel ...
calm, happy, curious

that looks... tiny, heavy,
transparent, patterned

that feels... soft,
smooth, spikey, rough

you can... eat, wear,
hold, float



FIND THE COLOUR



Find a space in the room. Call out a colour and each person has to find something that colour in the room and put their finger on it. They have to keep their finger on it until everyone in the room finds the colour. You can make this easier with colours such as red, yellow, or more challenging by saying 'find something the same colour as Jake's hair' or 'find something the same colour as a kiwi'.

IMAGINARY BALL THROW

Pretend to hold a "ball" of some sort (tennis ball, rugby ball, football, beach ball, basketball etc.) and pass it to the other person in the way you use the real ball. That person catches the imaginary ball in the way you would expect and then changes the "ball" into something else and tosses it in the way you would throw such an object to another person. For example, slam dunk or dribble an imaginary basketball, or hit a tennis ball with an imaginary bat.



THE HUMMING GAME

Take it in turns to hum a song, and the other person tries to guess what song it is.

What other
games can you
think of?

This resource has been developed using a range of ideas and sources, including:

- Trauma Informed Schools: <https://www.traumainformedschools.co.uk/>
- Theraplay: <https://theraplay.org/>
- Relationship Based Play
- Conversations that Matter. Talking with children and teenagers in ways that help (2015) – Margot Sunderland

Visit www.cavayoungwellbeing.wales for Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health information and resources for children, young people, parents and professionals.

Originally created by the Resilience Project team (2021) and adapted by School In-Reach Service (2024).

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg