



Play-based Somatics Skill Building

Games that teach kids how their body responds to big emotions.

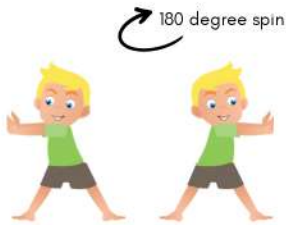
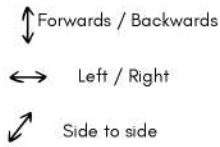


Game Setup examples:

Move Skills:



Counter balance



Pendulum Swing

Hands, Toes/Feet

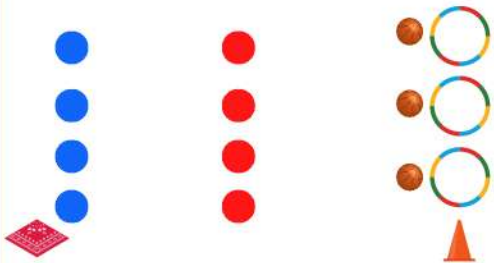


Arms / Legs

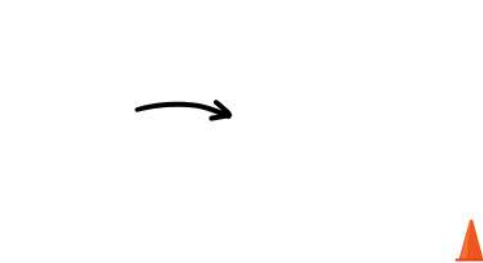


Shake Out

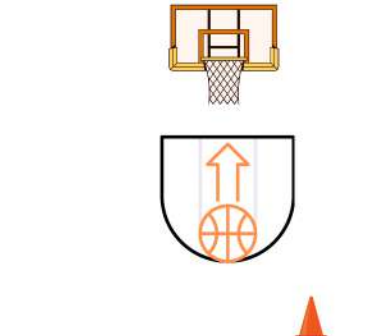
Stretch Game:



Handkerchiefs - Stretch & Stop

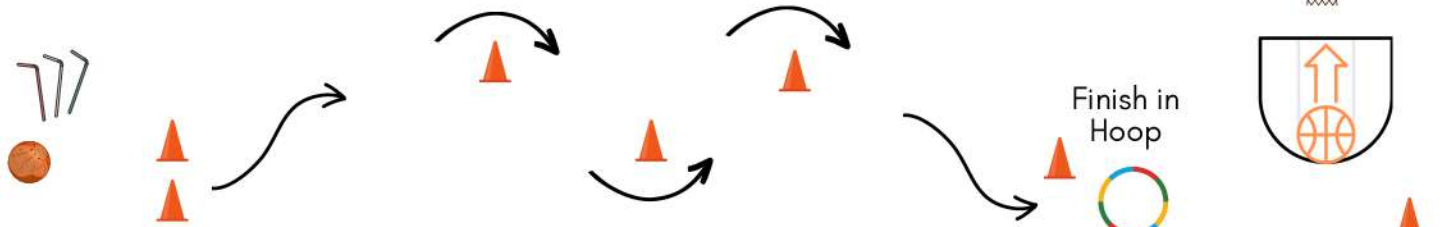


Hula Dribble - Moving Stretch



Points - Reaching Stretch

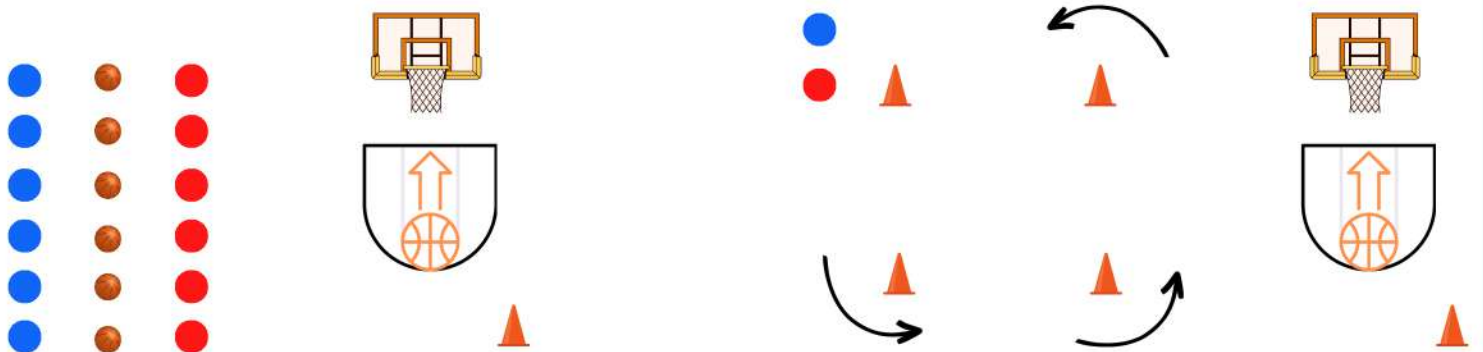
Breathing Game:



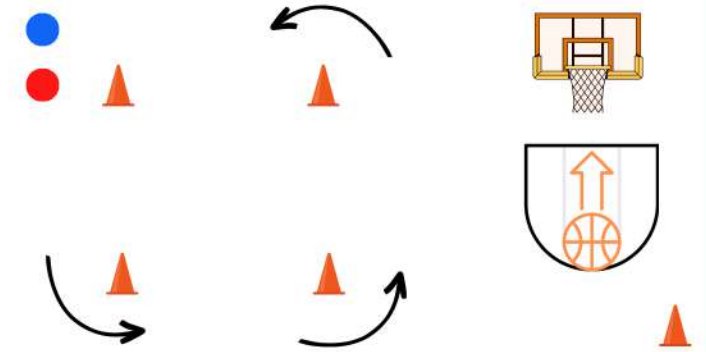
Foam Basketball - Obstacle Course

Points

Anger Games:



The Fastest Squeeze



The opposite Hand - aka Pacman

Important Statements:

These are the key educational points per program segment.

Move:

- Shaking or tremors is the way the body release stress hormones, calms itself down or readjusts to a normal state. You can help it along when you feel stress.
- When you balance or focus on coordination you have to pay close attention to what is going on internally, while also giving your body info about where you are physically in your environment. This focus is a quick and easy way to force your brain back to a logical state (the prefrontal cortex) using proprioception/interception.
- Slow movements like the pendulum swing help you connect your mind and body. Doing it fast is a quick way to release stress from anger and anxiety.

Stretch:

- When we practice consistent active movement, we encourage our brain to regularly release endorphins which helps improve our mood, keep us motivated and happy.
- Active movement activities also helps your body lower stress by promoting the release of hormones like cortisol.
- Most injuries happen in areas where there is a lack of movement so there is built up tension built also from tension that is stored from pent up unprocessed emotions.

Breathe:

- When we are stressed it's normal for us to inhale and hold in air. Unfortunately, by doing this we raise our heart rate and start the release of stress hormones. It's how our body reacts to danger but it also starts a circle of agitation inside you might not notice.
- Every time we inhale we raise our heart rate and increase the force of the heart. When we exhale, we achieve the opposite effect and cause our body to relax. Pursing your lips increases the strength of the calming effect over 30% so we calm our body faster.

Anger:

- When you use your opposite hand you have to pay close attention to what your hand is doing because it doesn't come naturally. This focus is a quick and easy way to force your brain back to a logical state (the prefrontal cortex).
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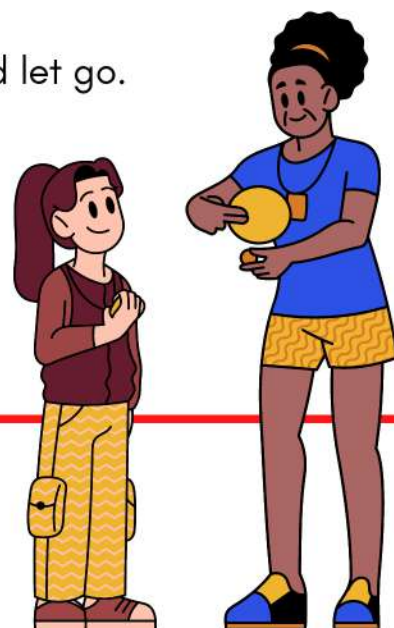
Emotion: Anger, Anxiety

Skill: Squeeze

Our body doesn't talk so it sends us signs about how it is feeling instead. When we are angry our body can show us by making our hands start to ball up. It happens so fast that we don't even notice it. Emotions like feeling frustrated or scared can make our hands feel these stress signals until we help them feel better. If we don't help our body feel better the stress can get trapped inside! Let's play a game that will teach us how to get the stress out of our hands:

Skill: Squeeze as hard as you can, hold for 2 seconds, and let go. Repeat 3 times or keep going if you need to.

What's happening: Our hands use physical pressure to try to make us feel strong and safe inside.



Let's Play: The Fastest Squeeze

Duration: 10 Minutes

Recommended Ages: 6+ yrs

Group Size: 4+ Children

Materials: Basketballs, cone

1. Create equal teams of 6 children and line up 2 teams opposite of each other so each child is facing the other. Line up a basketball in between the two children.
2. The instructor will let the kids know that, after yelling the skill squeeze, "ball" can be called out right after. Then instructor will begin to yell out each of the skills taught that day (breathe, stretch, move, squeeze) and the child will do the corresponding physical movement to what is being called out. For move, walk in place. For squeeze, ball up hands.
3. At the instructors discretion "ball" will be yelled out after one of the squeeze prompts. The fastest student to grab the ball gets a chance to run up to the designated spot to shoot for 1 point.
4. The team that has the most points after 5 minutes wins. Play offs between winning teams are a great way to continue this game.

Teacher's Guide: **The Squeeze Skill**

One of the most important automatic body reactions a child can learn is that their hands ball up because of anger. There are so much harm that can be avoided if a child had better tools to deal with this natural impulse. Teaching a child to squeeze as hard as they can, as needed, helps their mind regain control by assisting the body with release of this tension. It also helps improve the mind's functioning in really helpful ways (see below).

Start by reading the top game paragraph. Explain each skill using the description below before beginning the game instructions found on the game page. While playing the games remind children that anger creates stress and tension in our hands. We can make better decisions that keeps us from danger by helping our hands feel better. Consciously squeezing hard helps our mind understand think about the best options for us faster.

Skill: Squeeze as hard as you can, hold for 2 seconds, and let go.
Repeat 3 times or keep going if you need to.

What's happening: Our hands use physical pressure to try to make us feel strong and safe inside. It prepares us for action but can also be diverted to better thinking power.

The Science

Squeezing relieve stress within the hands from strong emotions:

Activating and relaxing the muscles of the hand by squeezing a stress ball can help a child release tension in their muscles, which helps them relieve stress. Unilateral hand clenching increases neuronal activity in the frontal lobe of the contra-lateral hemisphere. This type of hand clenching is associated with increased "mode of processing," memory encoding and retrieval. Together, these findings show that unilateral hand clenching can be used to help a child process thoughts and make better decisions by helping their hands relieve automatic stress.

Athletes have shown improvement of their performance under pressure simply by squeezing a ball or clenching their left hand before competition to activate certain parts of the brain, according to research published by the American Psychological Association. Squeezing a ball or clenching the left hand activated the right hemisphere of the brain and reduced the likelihood of the athlete's "choking under pressure". Whether its on or off the court, the squeeze skill, activates the brain in ways that helps decision making during high stress situations. Kids can use this as an intervention tool that puts more control in their hands during strong negative emotions.