



Play-based Somatics Skill Building

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

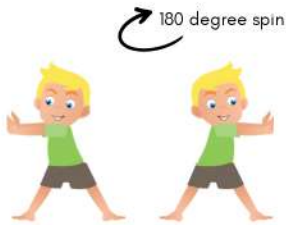
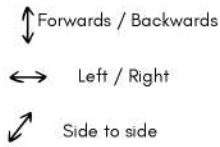


Game Setup examples:

Move Skills:



Counter balance



Pendulum Swing

Hands, Toes/Feet

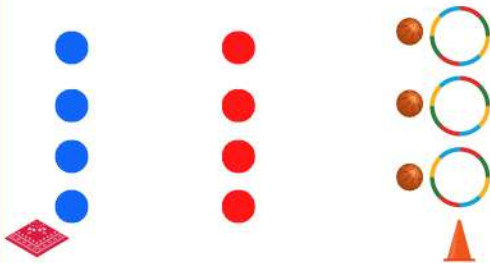


Arms / Legs

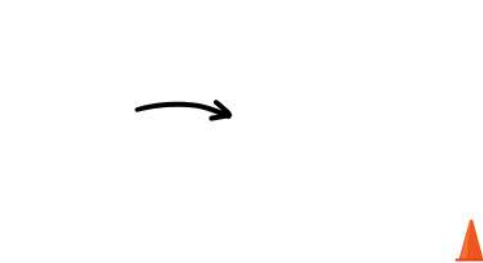


Shake Out

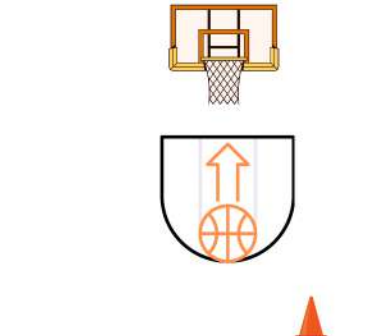
Stretch Game:



Handkerchiefs - Stretch & Stop

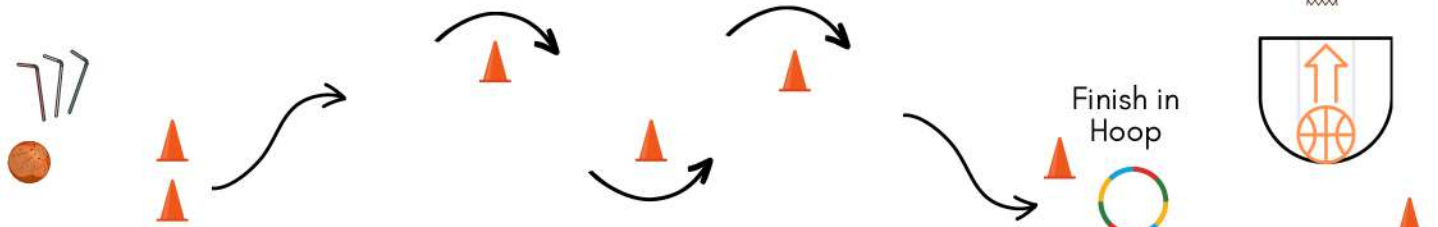


Hula Dribble - Moving Stretch



Points - Reaching Stretch

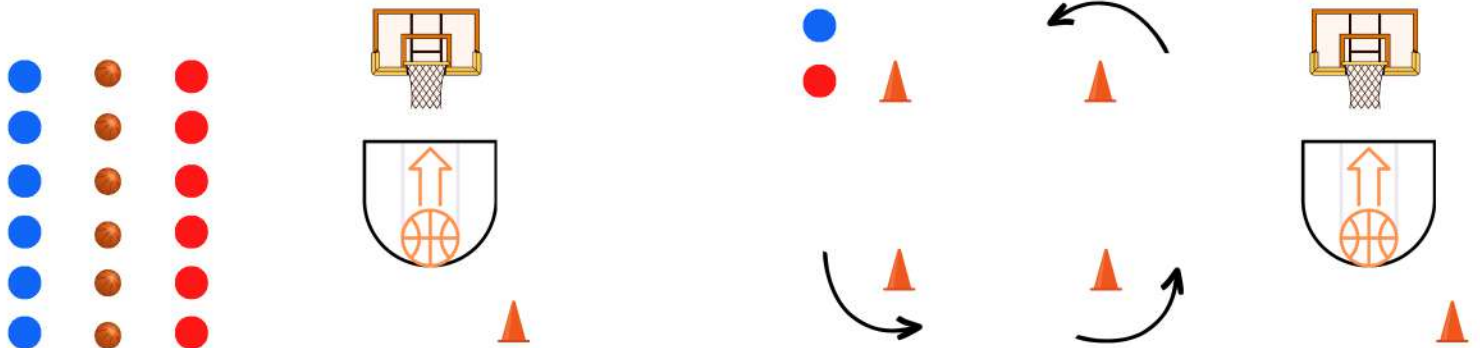
Breathing Game:



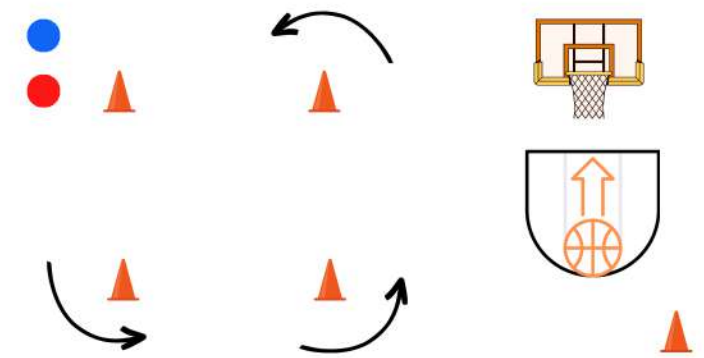
Foam Basketball - Obstacle Course

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: Fear, Anxiety, Anger

Skill: Stretch

Our body has its own memory inside. When we have big feelings and we tense up we remember it in our body's memory. That is bad because the memory we keep inside can make us feel nervous or uncomfortable in the future if we don't help our body release it. One easy way to do that is by looking for the tense spots we feel in our hands, arms, legs and back. When we find a spot that feels stiff and stretch it out our body feels better and doesn't hold on tight to the sadness, anger, or fear.

Skill: Feel through your body for tense spots. When you find one stretch it both ways for 1 minute. Repeat 3 times or more if you need to.

What's happening: Stretching helps our body let go of stress it's holding onto.

Let's Play: Stretch out, Stress out

Duration: 10 Minutes

Recommended Ages: 6+ yrs

Group Size: Any

Materials: Basketball, Color Handkerchiefs, Hula Hoops, Provided String

1. After the guided stretch (see instructor's guide) separate kids into teams evenly.
2. Line the children up in two lines so that they are facing each other and are at least 15 feet apart.
3. The children will toss up their handkerchief and hop to the other side on time to catch the one tossed up by the opposite child. If a child doesn't catch it they cannot help their team earn points in the second game.
4. Remaining kids move on to the hula hoop station where one child will drag the hoop using the attached string while the second child dribbles inside the hoop towards the finish line. Alternate so each child gets a chance to dribble and pull the string.
5. Each child that makes it to the finish line without dribbling outside of the hoop gets to take a shot at the rim to earn 1 point for their team. Team with the most points wins!



Teacher's Guide: The Stretch Skill

Now that we have learned important body movements that help release stress stuck in the body it's necessary to remind kids that activity relieves body tension. Walking, dancing, jumping and more help regulate the body's nervous system so it can more healthily release natural flight, fight and freeze responses.

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 stress in our body from strong emotions creates feelings of having to fight, run away or freeze in place, even when we aren't in physical danger. Focusing on activities that feel similar to the feeling to fight or flee helps our body to release those impulses and makes sure we don't retain them in the body.

Skill: Release the automatic stress negative emotions create in the body as they happen by dissipating it through activities that mimic the feeling.

What's happening: Active stretches help our body let go of stress it's holding onto.

The Science

Activities that mimic stress responses help eliminate them:

Active movement creates the type of activity that helps your brain release endorphins, which serves as natural painkillers. When we practice consistent active movement, we encourage our brain to regularly release endorphins which help 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. The combination of releases between endorphins stress reduction hormones helps you feel calm and in control of your life.

Most injuries and chronic pain in our bodies happen because of the gradual buildup of muscle tension from repetitive motions, habitual posture or pent up emotions that aren't fully processed. These gradually compromise our body's ability to function at its best so they cause pain.

On the other hand physical activity can change how your body processes oxygen while improving blood flow. Stress, even when it's just minor, can be a trigger for health issues due to inadequate blood flow to the heart. Since it improves circulation and lowers blood pressure it contributes to better protection against retained stress, illness and infection.