

Examples of Theraplay games

Be animated and fun and express awe and wonder at your child. Work co-operatively, there is no competition within the games.

Try to ensure the child always wins/gets guesses right

Make challenges very simple and easily achievable

Try to be at eye level with child (not looking down on child) e.g. sitting cross legged opposite each other. For some games (e.g. mirroring) the child stands and parent kneels to make you at eye level with each other

Practice on partner/friend to see what it feels like

Hand Rub

Rub lotion into child's hand and note blemishes/lines/creases/marks etc (comment on what you find and give bruises/blemishes an extra rub). Use soothing voice

Letters in Hand

Follow creases in hand from one side of palm to another or find letter of child's name in lines in palm of hand

Pretend Face Paint

Pretend you are doing face paint with cotton ball – note softness and describe parts of face positively – e.g. strong cheekbones, soft cheeks, button nose, rose red lips etc

Foil Mould

Wrap foil around hand - take time, squeeze it onto hands pointing out fingers etc. Then loosen and ease it off and talk about mould - lines, creases, joints, bumps etc

Weather report

(use firm rather than gentle touch – on back - describe weather with hands)

Sunshine – rub in shape of sun, shining down, beautiful, warm and golden (smooth all over)

Clouds move faster (rub faster)

Rain comes (pitter patter)

Wind howls

Clearing up

Sunshine comes again

Beautiful rainbow

Shapes on back

Take it in turns drawing shapes/letters on each others back using the song “I draw a shape/number/letter on your back – which shape/number/letter is that” Always say the child guessed correctly

Making pizza

Child lies on their front
rolling out dough, stretching, moulding into corners
tomato sauce, onions (make splodge squelch sounds and different hand movements to show different toppings
add toppings squelch, trickle, sprinkle

Making a wrap

Child on floor – add toppings with changing pressure etc, wrap in blanket and press down firmly.

Washing Machine

Child lies in middle of blanket we're doing the washing
Moves all clothes (scrunch), then spin (spin around), then rinse (back and forward), then drain (press) then iron (pillow on top and rub)

Feather blow

Stand with hands slightly cupped and gently blow feather between each other

Feather blow on cushion

Child and parent hold a cushion between them. Blow a cotton ball to and from each other across the cushion

Cotton ball blow on scarf/cushion

(hold scarf open between you and co-operatively blow cotton ball from one side to another to add a challenge try to work together to get all round edges of scarf)

Balloon tennis

Hit balloon harder and then softer, count how long you can keep up in air to make more difficult keep up with elbows etc

Balloon football

Work co-operatively to get to the goal – having to pass it between you a certain number of times before a shot is taken at goal.

Balloon between you

Keep balloon between you e.g. between stomachs, between heads and walk to door.

Bubble tennis

Blow bubbles and child has to pop with body parts e.g. elbow

Newspaper punch

Hold newspaper taught (away from your body) – child punches through on count of 1,2,3

For extra challenge add extra layers in turn

Basket ball

Parent makes ring with arms and child has to get newspaper scrunched into a ball into it. Added challenge make ring higher/further away

Toilet paper bust out

Wrap child up in toilet roll (like an Egyptian mummy) and on the special count (they have to wait) they bust out by bringing arms up

Special Handshake

Progressively in turn build up touch, clap, high fives etc

Zip Zap

Say Zip Zap and then progressively add something on as you go round circle e.g. Zip zap hand clap. Zip Zap hand clap high five etc

Progressive pass around

Pass a 'gift' to the next person e.g. a squeeze of the hand, or nose beep or pat on back. Each person does previous one and adds one of their own

Something's changed

Sit cross legged opposite each other – take it in turns. One closes eyes and you change something about yourself (take sock off, change scarf, undue button) other person has to guess what has changed

Hide a cotton ball

Hide cotton ball – exaggerate your search to find it

Feather/cotton ball guess

Close eyes and touch with feather/cotton ball and other person has to guess which touched

Sticker match

Take in turns to put sticker on each other – the other then puts a sticker on the same place, comment on what you are doing. To add challenge afterwards - see if you can touch stickers to each other e.g. shoulder to shoulder etc

Decorate child

With stickers, pipe cleaners, ribbons etc and describe body parts etc (I'm putting some tinsel in your long shinny hair, I'm putting a sticker on those strong shoulders, I'm putting a pipe cleaner round those supple wrists, I'm putting a ring on those gorgeous fingers)

Handstack

Progressively put hands on top of each other. Try not to use verbal cues, if child gets it wrong it doesn't matter or help child by moving their hand rather than telling them. To add challenge – go higher, lower, faster slower

1 Potato 2 potato

Do above game but with fists instead

Thumb war

1,2,3,4 I declare a thumb war

Partner pull up

Sit on floor, bend knees, toes together with palms touching. If this is too difficult try to make an adaptation.

Co-operatively try to pull each other up

Push me over pull me up

Child sits with back to wall (opposite parent also sitting) child's feet in parents hands
1,2,3 push feet gently to push parent over
Parent holds out hands and child pulls up.

Eye Signals – follow with movement

Parent kneels, child stands

Parent moves head and makes eye movement and child follows directions and parent moves with child

e.g. Head to left means step to left, head to right means step right

Eyes up means step back

Eyes down means step forward

Mirroring

Sit facing child – move hands, arms and face in gentle simple way – ask child to mirror your movements

Mother may I (like Simon says)

Child and parent stand at opposite ends of the room. Parent says take 4 baby steps towards me/ 2 giant steps/3 tiptoe steps etc. Child has to say “mother may I” or else she can't take the steps. End with a big hug or high five.

Blanket swing

Put child in a blanket – adults hold corners and swing gently singing twinkle twinkle or you are my sunshine

Draw around hand/foot

Make a picture of child's hand by drawing round it. Draw around parents hand on same paper to compare sizes. Be sure to maintain verbal contact “I'm coming to your ankle, I'm coming to tickle spot under your arm” You can do whole body drawing.

Paint on hand and make a print

Get a paint pallet. Paint different colours on different parts of child's foot, commenting on what you are doing. Gently place foot down on a piece of card and draw around foot at the same time. Gently take foot away and see what the picture is like. Gently clean child's foot with water and cotton balls

La La Magnets

Child stands; parent kneels to be eye level with parents. Hold hands and sing la, la, la and parent chooses body part – elbow, knees, shoulders. Parent and child move towards each other and stick the body parts together

Measuring

Measure child's height, length or arms, feet, hands etc. Measure surprising things such as child's smile, length of ears, how high they can jump. You can use fruit tape and then feed it to child.

Peek-a-boo

Hold child's hands (or feet) up together in front of your face. Peek around hands or separate the hands (or feet) to find the child

Cotton ball touch

Have child close their eyes. Touch child gently with cotton ball. Have child open their eyes and indicate where they were touched.

Tunnel

The child crawls through a tunnel of a blanket or made of pillows to adults kneeling at other side

Row row row your boat

Sing song adding child's name at the end "Erin's such a dream"

Punch pillows

Hold cushions/pillows away from your body. On the signal get the child to punch/push hard and push the cushions right out of your hands

Cotton ball war

Divide cotton balls into 2 piles. Your child sits opposite you and holds one pile and you have the other. On the signal you begin throwing at each other and see who can get most to the other side. Use a countdown as you throw 5,4,3,2,1 so that there is a clear end to the game

Beanie drop

Place bean bag or soft toy on your head. Hold your child's hands. Give a signal and drop the bean bag into the child's hands by tilting your head towards child

Throw Feathers

Pass child feathers and see how far they can throw them. Give lots of wow's and appreciation

Sharks

Parent and child are fish swimming/wandering around (pretending they are fish) – pieces of newspaper on floor are the islands. Suddenly says "sharks coming" and child and parent have to get to safety on an island. When shark goes, child and parent resume swimming. Each time a piece of paper is removed/ folded in half

Karate chop

Hold some newspaper a little scrunched up in front of you. On the signal, the child does a chop down, right through the newspaper

Crawling Race

You and the child crawl on your hands and knees as fast as you can around a stack of pillows. Try to catch the other's feet. Switch direction

Mother May I

Parent stands at one side of room, looks at child and gives instructions to child e.g. take 1 big step, 1 small step, 1 duck step etc. Then child has to say "mother may I" and parent says "you may" Parent turns back to face wall as child takes the instructed step. Parent turns around and tries to 'catch' child out to see if they are moving. If they are caught moving they have to return to the start. Child is trying to get to the parent without being spotted moving and touch them on the shoulder.

Obstacle Course

Place obstacles/cushions in the room. Hold your child close to you facing you and lead them around the room, not touching the objects you have placed there.

Cooperative cotton ball race

Parent and child get on hands at knees at end of room. Take turns blowing a cotton ball or ping pong to the other side of the room. You can try to better your time on repeated trials.

Balance pillow on feet

Child lies on back with feet in air. Place a pillow on their feet and see if they can balance it. Add to challenge by adding another pillow

Cushion/pillow balance

Have child stand on cushion on the floor. Add to challenge by adding a cushion and getting child to stand on stack. Child uses parent to help them balance. Keep adding cushions. If child is small, have them jump into your arms

Songs

Twinkle twinkle little star

(Sing whilst holding/rocking or face child)

Twinkle twinkle little star
What a lovely (special) girl/boy you are
Long brown/blonde/black hair and
Soft soft cheeks
Big brown/blue/green eyes through which you peek
Twinkle twinkle little star
What a lovely/special girl you are

Song Tommy Thumb (playing with each finger)

Tommy Thumb Tommy Thumb where are you, here I am, here I am, how do you do?
Peter Pointer Peter Pointer...
Big man tall Big man tall....
Ruby ring Ruby ring...
Baby small baby small....

You are my sunshine

You are my My only....
You make me happy when skies are grey
You'll never know dear how much I love you
With me, my.... Will stay

Row row row your boat

Sing whilst holding child and rocking them
Merrily merrily merrily merrily
...(child)... is such a dream

Clapping Games

A sailor went to sea sea sea (touch forehead)
Chop chop chop (touch forearm)
Knee knee knee (touch knee)
Toe toe toe (touch toe)
Then – sea chop knee toe

BINGO (clapping and miss letters out)

There was a farmer who had a do and Bingo was his name oh
B-I-N-G-O x 3
And bingo was his name