



## Be a team

- ⇒ Try a fun family nickname
- ⇒ If you have a partner, keep that team mentality as a couple
- ⇒ Come up with a special name only *you* call your child

## Be an improv comedian

- ⇒ Shoot for “yes, and...” instead of “no” or “but.”
- ⇒ Accept creative, wacky ideas (as long as they are safe)
- ⇒ Don’t be afraid to get silly

## Be a safe big critter

- ⇒ Get in some rough and tumble play or safe physical touch whenever possible
- ⇒ Let your cub see your warm gaze with some friendly eye contact
- ⇒ Never *force* play – depending on your child’s history, some physical contact and unpredictability may be uncomfortable

## Be flexible

- ⇒ Keep reading your child’s cues
- ⇒ Take a break with a drink of water, counting, breathing or a quick walk as needed

## A few minutes to play...

---

- **Peek-a-Boo** – It's not just for babies! Use anything to hide your face - hands, towel, door – and enjoy the suspense of a separation and reconnection. Get silly! Great for increasing “felt safety.”
- **So Strong** – Sit face-to-face (child can be on lap) and guide child to use hands (or fingertips, nose, elbows) to gently push you down while you comment on her/his strength.
- **Back and Forth** – Child runs, hops or somersaults between 2 safe adults with encouragement and happy greetings from each adult. Can be good welcome home ritual in the evening.
- **Love Mark** – Offer a marker or 2 and let your child draw on your hand (or shoulder, etc). You can then draw on them so you both have a little piece of each other all day. Eases separations.
- **Buttons** – Gently press nose, ear, toe and so on while making a noise or silly action each time.
- **Cotton Ball Races** – Use straws to blow your cotton ball across the table or sit on opposite sides and try to blow one cotton ball off the other person's side of the table.
- **Pop Cheeks** – Fill cheeks with air and guide child's hands to push gently on cheeks and pop the air out. Reverse roles. Can help break a tantrum if you do pop cheeks on yourself!
- **Sticker Face** – Take turns putting stickers on your faces. Enjoy your silly faces in the mirror!
- **Lotion Pass** – Put lotion on your nose, pass to child's cheek, back to your forehead then to child's belly or arm for you to rub in. Start and end wherever you both feel comfortable.
- **Secret Handshake** – Great for all ages and another good way to ease transitions.
- **Pillow Tower** – Have your child stand on a pillow. Cheer for them keeping their balance (with assistance if needed). Next, have them step off while you add another pillow and another and another! If safe, allow the child to topple onto of you.
- **Drum Copy** – Use a drum, plastic bowl or table top to tap a tune. Let your child try and copy their rhythm. Take turns leading and following. Helpful for getting in sync with each other.
- **Lotion Spots** – Put a dab of lotion on your finger. Ask your kiddo to close eyes while you put the lotion on one spot and tap around (to playfully fake them out). Before they open their eyes, they guess where the lotion is on their body. Play before bed or while applying sunscreen.
- **Mirror** – One of you is the person, the other is the mirror mimicking the person's actions. Make funny faces, wave hands, point to your eyes then heart then your child to say “I love you.”
- **Thumb Wrestling** or **Thumb Grab** – Great games for waiting rooms!
- **Trace Me** – Take turns tracing each other's hands, feet or even whole bodies. Use paper and crayons or sidewalk chalk or whipped cream – get creative!
- **Bubble Games** – Take turns blowing lots of bubbles to chase and pop. With older kids, chew gum and see who can blow the bigger bubble.
- **Balloons** – So many fun ways to play with balloons! Keep them in the air, pass them back and forth or see how many you can work together to keep up at once.

