

# DIR Floortime

Where connection nurtures development - The DIRFloortime Approach



## What is DIR Floortime?

DIRFloortime® is a relationship-based approach that nurtures the emotional, social, and developmental growth of neurodivergent children and children with diverse abilities.

DIRFloortime meets the child where they are, valuing their interests and unique way of experiencing the world.

Emotional attunement and responsive, meaningful interactions between the play partner (parent or therapist) and child is at the heart of its practice.

*D*evelopmental  
*I*ndividual differences  
*R*elationship-based



## Floortime

A conscious and intentional approach to engaging, interacting, and playing with our children. It involves using specific principles and ways of being with our child to sustain connection and support their development.

The focus is on nurturing meaningful back-and-forth exchanges—Circles of Communication—through activities our child loves most.

This approach fosters joyful connection, promoting regulation, shared attention, and problem-solving. We do this by following the child's lead, co-regulating, and using affect (emotional expression) to create shared meaning within play and interaction.



2025

Engaging Interactions

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# D/R Floortime

Building relationships through play to support lifelong development.

## Developmental

### The Functional Emotional Developmental Capacities

1. Self Regulation and Interest in the World
2. Engaging and Relating
3. Purposeful two-way communication
4. Complex communication and shared problem solving
5. Using symbols and creating emotional ideas
6. Logical thinking and building bridges between ideas



## Individual Differences

Individual differences refers to each child's unique way of experiencing the world.

This includes their sensory profile (how they respond to sensory input), interests (what naturally motivates them), play skills (how they engage in and explore play), motor planning (ability to plan and carry out movements), and communication (how they express themselves and understand messages).

Understanding these individual differences helps tailor interactions that support emotional connection, regulation, and development.



## Relationship-Based

The deep, nurturing connections between the child and caregivers or therapists. These emotional relationships are the foundation for development. Through warm, responsive, and attuned interactions, adults support the child's regulation, engagement, and growth—meeting the child at their level and building upward through shared experiences and play.

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## How to Help Your Child Grow Through Play and Connection

Floortime strategies to build connection and support development:

- **Follow the child's lead:** Join the child in their interests or play, letting them guide the interaction. This builds trust and motivation to engage.
- **Meet them where they are at:** Recognise the child's current developmental, emotional, and sensory state, and respond appropriately—rather than expecting them to be somewhere they're not yet ready for.
- **Attune ourselves:** Be emotionally present and responsive. Tune in to the child's signals, needs, and feelings to connect in a meaningful way.
- **Be playful:** Use fun, creativity, and imagination to spark joy and interaction. Playfulness helps lower stress and encourages engagement.
- **Wait, watch, wonder:** Pause and observe before acting. Watch the child's cues and behavior, and wonder about what they might be feeling or trying to express. This helps deepen understanding and builds thoughtful responses.
- **Use affect:** Express emotion through your tone, facial expressions, and gestures to communicate meaning and help the child connect emotionally.



Together, these practices help create a safe, responsive, and emotionally rich environment where development can

*flourish!*