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Simple ways to play with your child

1. Hand Stack

Facing each other, place one hand out, palm down and encourage the other to place their hand on top. Put your hand on top of their hand and have them put their other hand on top of yours. Alternate your hands, moving hands higher. See how high you can reach, noticing when your hands block the eye contact and when your eyes re-connect. When you reach the top, come back down, "discovering" the person again as their eyes disappear and re-emerge behind your hands.

2. Straight Face Challenge

Facing each other, tell the other person you want them to keep a straight face as you do and say things to try to make them laugh. Tell them that you will not touch them, but you can otherwise do or say silly things. Have fun discovering how easy or hard it is to laugh. Switch: ask the other person to try to make you laugh. Notice how fun it is to laugh together.

3. Copy Me or Be My Mirror

Facing each other, tell the other person that you are going to pretend that you are looking into a mirror. Tell them you want them to do just what you do as if they are your mirror image. Do things with your face, arms, legs, etc. for them to copy being careful to do things slow enough for them to keep up, but also fast enough that the other person stays interested. Switch and have the other person lead.

4. Special Handshake

Work together to create a special handshake. Think of different ways you can connect your hands: use one hand, two hands, arms, fingers, motions. Take turns each coming up with a different part of the handshake until you have a handshake that has several steps that you have created together. Try to end with something that involves eye contact.

5. Peanut Butter and Jelly

Tell the other person that you are going to say "peanut butter" a special way. Ask them to respond by saying "jelly" the same way you say peanut butter. Experiment with saying peanut butter a variety of different ways, e.g. use a high voice, loud voice, whisper, deep voice, English accent, sing it, while plugging your nose, with your hand over your mouth, etc. Start with easier voices and move to harder ones. Switch and have the other person say peanut butter for you to say jelly.

7. Silly Ways to Cross the Room

This is a variation on follow the leader. Take turns thinking of different ways to move from one side of the room to the other. You can take big steps, small steps, march, walk backwards, jump, crawl, frog leap, heel/toe, crab walk, waddle like a duck, tiptoe, walk like Frankenstein, fly like an airplane, etc. For more "containment" this activity can be done holding hands.

8. Thumb War

Clasp hands and try to pin the other person's thumb down. Before you begin you can start with: "1-2-3-4, I declare a thumb war, 5-6-7-8 try to keep your thumb straight." This can get competitive, so make sure the child is not getting too worked up, and only continue if it is fun for both.