

KEYS TO MAKING AGGRESSION THERAPEUTIC



Aggression is a symptom of sympathetic nervous system activation when a child perceives a threat or challenge.

It is a normal biological response.

- 1) Become the external regulator to help modulate the intensity. Children need to be able to **borrow the therapist's regulatory capacity**.
- 2) Any intervention must **encourage children to become mindful** of the thoughts, feelings, and sensations in their bodies.
- 3) Model to children how to **stay connected to themselves in the midst of the intensity** so that children can observe and learn alternative ways of working with intensity.
- 4) **Be authentic and congruent** to promote feelings of safety for children. If not, children will escalate the play.
- 5) Boundaries must be set when the aggression moves **outside of the therapist's window of tolerance** and when there is a genuine safety concern.
- 6) Create a **neuroception of safety** if emotional flooding occurs to help children get back into their window of tolerance.