



CONNECTION TIME

connection

noun

/kə'nek.jən/

1. the act of connecting: the state of being connected.
2. the act of joining or being joined.
3. a relationship, association.

Hey there!

I'm Yolanda Huijsamer, Play Therapist and Social Worker in Private Practice that specializes in working with children and adolescents!

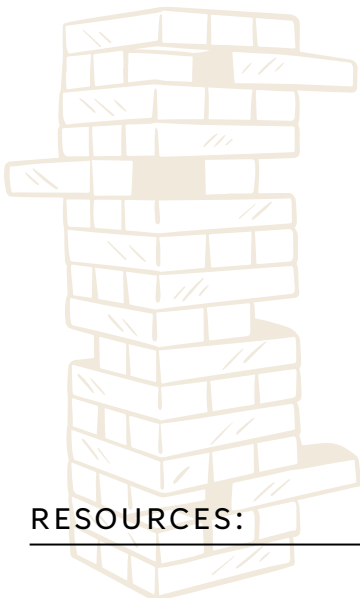
Thank you for downloading this resource. I love creating resources that will support you in your journey to become the best version of your parent self.

Please feel free to share this resource with anyone you think may benefit from it.

And I'm happy to answer any questions at my details below!

Happy Connecting!

Yolanda



RESOURCES:

Guernsey, L., and Ryan, V. (2013). Group Filial Therapy. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley.

Landreth, G.L., & Bratton, S.C. (2020). Child-Parent Relationship therapy (CPRT): An Evidence-Based 10-Session Filial Therapy model, 2nd ed. New York, NY: Routledge.

Children don't always feel as connected to their parents as they want to. And often this lack of connection manifests in behavioural issues.

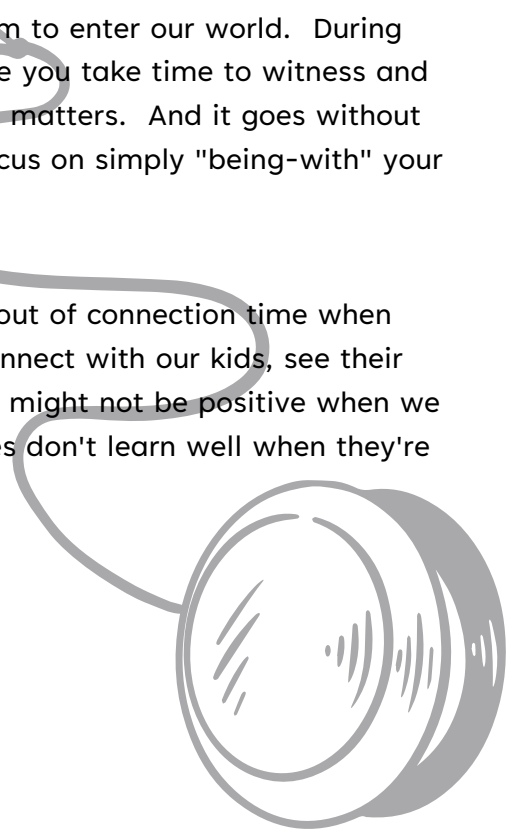
In order to create positive change, **we have to first build connection**. Our kids want our full attention more than anything else. Our attention communicates that they are safe, important, valuable, and loved. Spending time with your child will lead to your child feeling better, which will then lead to better behaviour. Note that behaviour comes last. We cannot start here. We must start with connection.

A great way to understand the flow of connection, is to imagine your child has an emotional bank account and the currency in this bank account is connection. Behaviour reflects the status of the bank account - full or depleted. And just like a bank account, we draw from our connection capital regularly. When we say, "Time to leave" in a rushed way, or "Screen time is over" you spend capital, because we often have to ask kids to do things they don't want to do and to respect our rules when they'd rather not.

Having a healthy amount of connection capital leads to kids feeling confident, capable, safe, and worthy. **And these positive feelings on the inside lead to positive behaviour on the outside** - such as cooperation, flexibility and regulation.

The goal with connection time is to **enter your child's world** - which is very different from the rest of a child's day in which we, over and over, ask them to enter our world. During connection time, you allow your child to direct the play while you take time to witness and notice, but not direct - your presence in their world is what matters. And it goes without saying: no phones! It's a time in which you intentionally focus on simply "being-with" your child and enjoying your time together.

The golden rule is that we (and the child) will get the most out of connection time when we're calm. During calmer moments, we can slow down, connect with our kids, see their goodness, and develop stronger relationships. The outcome might not be positive when we try to connect in the heat of the moment, because our bodies don't learn well when they're in fight-or-flight mode.





THE **5** RULES OF CONNECTION TIME

So, let's get practical and talk about how to implement connection time in your home:

Give it a name to indicate that this time is special. I use the term Connection Time. Feel free to name it something else.

Limit time to ten to fifteen minutes.

No phones, no screens, no siblings, no distractions.

Let your child pick the play. This is key.

Allow your child to be in the spotlight; your job is only to notice, imitate, reflect, and describe what they're doing.



It's important to actively state that you are putting your phone away. This shows your child that you're aware of how distracting a phone can be and ensures that they feel seen and special. By following these guidelines, you'll be able to connect with your toddler, middle schooler or teenager. Also, if you have a busy schedule, try to start connection time once a week and increase the amount of days as your schedule becomes more manageable.