



Rhythm2Recovery

Exercises for Supporting Young People with Recovery from Trauma using the Drum



Regulation Techniques

The Rhythmic Wave

Practice moving from high intensity, chaotic drumming to a slow steady pulse at around 60-80bpm. The high intensity drumming represents emotional overload and this practice replicates de-escalation from high levels of emotional arousal to a calm state. Do this several times and each time the child comes back to the calm state ask them to become aware of their body and relax any tension, particularly in the neck and shoulder region and to deepen and slow their breathing.

This can be done with an adult support person playing alongside, but the child is given control. Once the technique is mastered move this practice to the body, drumming on the thighs.

Hold onto Your Rhythm

Play with the child a steady rhythm (e.g. B B T T). Ask the child to hold onto their part and stay at the same tempo (speed) while you **very slowly** increase your tempo and change your rhythm.

Fade to Nothing

Play a steady rhythm alongside the child (simple is good) and then together lower the volume gradually (**slowly**) until the sound disappears.

Soothing Techniques

1. Teach the child to do gentle rotations using the palm of the hand on the drum and moving away towards the outside edge of the instrument and then in towards the opposite edge.

Imagine you are now in a safe place – where would that be?

Moving away imagine all those fear or hurts moving away

Moving in imagine all the comfort and support coming your way

2. Try this same technique on the body – Parent/Child

The parent doing a circular comforting motion whilst using comforting words.

Cathartic Exercises for the Release of Feelings

The drum is a safe place for you to place your feelings.

A Storm of Feelings

Playing the drum move through a storm scenario while talking about the similarities of how our feelings build up and then calm down again.

- Start off by rubbing the drum with the palm of the hand to represent the wind prior to the storm beginning – *what type of things start off your feelings?*
- Use the fingertips to replicate the first drops of rain – *as your feelings grow inside of you do recognise any early warning signs that might help to offset the coming storm?*
- Play the drum on the edge getting louder to represent heavy rain falling
- Move to the middle of the drum (Bass) to represent thunder
- Then reverse to replicate the storm receding – *What sort of things help you feel calmer?*

An Emotional Journey

Invite the child to play through an emotional experience or utilise as a check in technique – “Play how you’ve been feeling since I last saw you”.

Emphasise there is no wrong way to play through your feelings – “you can’t get it wrong, and I will play along with you, like I’m there as your friend, supporting you”.

The parent or support worker plays what the child plays, mirroring their technique as closely as possible, focusing only on their drumming and avoiding eye contact. At the completion of their journey the supporting adult may check in to their own feelings (don’t think) and discuss with the child – “I really felt Was that something you were feeling?”

Grounding Exercises

Heartbeat Breathing

“Sit on the edge of your chair and feel your feet connected to the ground below them, imagining roots extending from your feet into the ground cementing you to the earth/floor”.

Play the Heartbeat Rhythm (B B - -) and then breathe out and as you breath push into the floor with your feet. At the end of the exhale play the Heartbeat again and then breathe in, again maintaining your focus on the connection between your feet and the floor. At the end of the inhale play the Heartbeat and repeat.

This four-part cycle can be extended each week to longer periods of breathing – 3 seconds, 4 seconds, 5 seconds.

Mindful Walking

Using a small but deep drum (frame drum) the adult and child walk together – one step for each Bass note – space the notes approximately 4-5 seconds apart.

As you walk try to place the full sole of the foot on the floor (avoid heels and toes in the air) and take steps no larger than the width of your shoulders. Focus on a strong connection to the ground with each step.

Communication Exercises

Rumble If.....

Use the phrase “Rumble If.....” to ask questions of the child

- Rumble on your drum if you’re feeling happy
- Rumble on your drum if you’re feeling nervous
- Rumble on your drum if you are having fun
- Rumble on your drum if you love to rumble on your drum

Rumble Ball

Showcase an imaginary ball and send it between yourself and the child.

When the ball is in the air everyone rumbles on their drum.

When it is caught the rumble stops.

The ball moves through the air slowly, follow it with your eyes and catch it with your hands together (clap). When the ball is caught the catcher answers a question or makes a statement. *Make it fun!*

Talk to Me

Ask the child to have a conversation with you or with another person in the room, (parent/sibling etc.), using only your/their drums. Examine the way they communicate for issues such as turn taking, listening, attunement, power differentials etc. Practice again with a focus on any areas that may be detrimental to their ability to communicate well with others.

Note many of these exercises can be done without an expensive drum, using a table, cardboard box or the body (thighs).