

Here's Why

Bodily

Regulation

is the

Foundation for

Connection,

Play

and **Learning**

What is bodily regulation?

Bodily regulation is our ability to process and organise information from our senses - touch, movement, body position - to help us feel calm, focused, and ready to engage with the world.

It's the foundation that everything else is built on.

When children's sensorimotor systems are working well, they can regulate their emotions, connect with others, and access learning.

Sensory Systems

Our bodies have sensory systems that tell us where we are in space, whether we're balanced, what we're touching, and how our muscles are working.

These systems - tactile (touch), vestibular (balance and movement), and proprioceptive (body awareness) - develop through early experiences of being held, rocked, and moved.

When these foundation systems are solid, children feel organised and safe in their bodies.



You can't build emotional regulation
on top of sensory dysregulation.

If a child's body is constantly sending
confusing signals - feeling unbalanced,
unsure where they are in space, or
uncomfortable with touch - it's nearly
impossible for them to focus on
learning or relationships.

The sensorimotor foundation has to
be secure first.

Emotional Regulation

When children feel organised and comfortable in their bodies, they can start to notice and understand their internal signals - "I'm hungry," "I'm tired," "I'm feeling upset."

This body awareness (called interoception) is essential for emotional regulation.

Children who struggle with bodily regulation often struggle to identify what they're feeling emotionally.



Impact on Relationships and Play

Play requires a regulated body - you need balance to swing, body awareness to build with blocks, and comfort with touch to engage with messy materials.

Relationships require being able to tolerate closeness, read social cues, and stay regulated enough to connect.

When sensorimotor foundations are shaky, both play and relationships become much harder.



Implications for Therapy and Support

This is why the order of therapeutic interventions matters.

If a child's sensorimotor systems need support, that's where we start - not with talk therapy or complex social skills training.

We build from the foundation up, ensuring each level is stable before adding the next.