

Tortoise and Hare: After the Race

Dynamic Equilibrium: Going Fast, Going Slow, and Stopping

Do you know the story of the race between the tortoise and the hare? After their race, Tortoise and Hare sat down under a tree for a well-deserved rest. They got to talking about where they'd like to go and what they'd like to see if they ever had a chance to go on an adventure. And then the idea struck them: they could go on an adventure *together!*

See page 190 for the lyrics to "Tortoise and Hare," the song for this activity sequence.

EQUIPMENT

- Blanket
- Toy
- Cloth
- Plastic bowl
- Hill
- Tape or rope
- Beanbag
- Articles of clothing
- Boxes or suitcases

KEY BENEFITS

- Concentration
- Stillness
- Working in teams
- Pacing

LANGUAGE FOCUS

fast, slow, stop

CRITICAL SAFEGUARDS

When asking children to do things quickly, ensure there are safe surfaces for them to fall onto.

TEACHING GEMS

- These activities are inspired by the classic fable of "The Tortoise and the Hare." Add this tale to your storytime so children can visualize the speedy hare and slow tortoise as they play.
- For "Tortoise Roll," have another adult (or an older sibling) lie on the floor and talk to baby while he's in the upside-down position. This adds stimulation to the activity while giving baby an even more dynamic understanding that there's more than one way to see the world.
- For games with verbal cues, such as "Slow-Fast-Stop," as the child learns to listen and respond to your verbal instructions, challenge his auditory and memory development by changing the cues (blow a whistle, use colors or numbers instead of words, and so forth). See page 27 for more ideas.



ON THE MOVE



Snugglers

FIRST SENSATIONS OF MOVEMENT. Even though infants don't yet have the power of independent mobility, when you move them, the brain is already picking up important information about balance—information it will need to steady them for crawling and, later, walking.

TORTOISE AND HARE WARM UP. Tell the story of Tortoise and Hare as you massage baby. Slow your voice and the massage as you introduce the tortoise; quicken the pace when you introduce the hare. (D 2–3 min.)

WATCH ME GROW

IN THE KNOW



Squigglers



ORIENTATION. Holding baby in different positions is great practice for the day when he'll need to figure out how to navigate his environment.

TORTOISE TIPS. Lay baby on the floor on a blanket and bundle his arms up together in the blanket so he's nice and snug. Now, gently roll him in circles so that he can feel the flatness of the floor on all sides of his back. Sing the "Tortoise" verse as you play. (D 2–3 min.)

TORTOISE AND HARE GET READY TO RIDE. Lay baby on his back and pedal his feet like a bicycle. Pedal slowly like a tortoise and quickly like a hare. Sing the "Tortoise and Hare" song as you play. (D 1–2 min.)

HARE HOPS. Hold baby under his arms in front of you with his feet touching the ground. Sing the "Hare" verse, and very gently and slowly press him down a few inches so that his knees bend, then bring him back up slowly. Repeat several times for him to get the feel of the movement, then increase your pace to a gentle hopping motion. (D 2–3 min.)

TORTOISE AND HARE TAKE A BUMPY RIDE.

RIDE. Sit baby on your knee and bounce him very gently. Sing the "Tortoise" verse from the song as you slowly bounce baby; then quicken your pace as you sing the "Hare" verse. Always bounce very gently and watch for baby's reaction. Stop if he's not enjoying the ride. (D 1–2 min.)



Scampers



YOUR VERY OWN WAY. When children are free to move around and react to their environment, they are not only getting where they want to go, they're developing confidence in their physical selves.

TORTOISE SHELL. As the child crawls around the floor, drape some cloth over his back. Encourage him to crawl out of it. Next, try putting a soft toy or an empty plastic bowl on his back (his "shell") to give him a different sense of himself as he crawls. (D 2–3 min.)

TORTOISE HOPS. Follow the child as he crawls around the room. Sing the "Tortoise and Hare" song. Following the rhythm of the song, every few paces pick up the child around the waist. Lift him a few inches off the ground, turn him around, and put him right back down so he can continue crawling. (D 2–3 min.)

TORTOISE ROLL. Sit and hold baby on your lap facing you. Place his favorite toy facing you on the floor. Hold baby securely around the shoulders and back. Sing the "Tortoise" verse and bend forward while you tip him back very slowly and carefully until his head is upside down. Hold for a few moments so he can examine his toy upside down. Come back to your sitting position. (R 3–5 times)



Stompers



CONTROLLING SPEED is an important underpinning for coordinated, whole-body movement. But it's not as easy as it looks when you're still getting your balance.

TORTOISE AND HARE GO UP AND DOWN. On a small mound or hill, encourage the child to crawl very, very slowly up the hill, like the tortoise, and run down the hill fast, like the hare. Next, have him run up the hill as fast as he can and very, very slowly crawl back down. Sing the "Tortoise and Hare" song as you play. (D 2–3 min.)

SLOW-FAST-STOP. Prep children by explaining the Slow-Fast-Stop game: When you call out, "Slow," whatever they're doing, they have to slow down and go very, very slowly. When you call, "Fast," they have to speed up. And when you call out, "Stop," children have to stop. While they play, randomly call out the cues. Assist and remind children as needed. (D 5–10 min.)

CHASING THE HARE. Children just beginning to walk love nothing more than your encouragement. Get down on the floor and chase the child around. Catch him once in a while for a hug. Get in his way so he has to find his way past you. Pick him up, swing him around, then back to the floor and off he goes again! (D 5–10 min.)



FAST LANE. SLOW LANE. Use tape or rope to create two lanes side by side—a fast lane and a slow lane. Working with 1 child, have the child start in the slow lane and move very, very slowly. When you call out, "Fast," have him jump to the fast lane and run as fast as he can. Alternate between fast and slow to the end of the lanes. (R 2–3 times)

ON THE MOVE



Scooters

SPEED SEQUENCES. Once children have mastered the ability to speed up and slow down at will, creating sequences with speed strengthens their control and balance while building cognitive and muscle memory.

TORTOISE AND HARE ROLL. Hare rolls fast. Tortoise rolls slow. Create a pattern for children to follow as they roll, such as "Hare-Tortoise-Tortoise-Hare." Reverse direction. (R 3–5 times with different patterns)

WATCH ME GROW

TORTOISE AND HARE PASS. Have the children form a circle, alternating tortoises and hares. Pass a beanbag around the circle using both hands—tortoises pass slowly, hares pass as fast as they can. Switch directions, then have children switch roles. (R 2–4 rounds) Next, have the tortoises get down on all fours and the hares crouch down. The tortoises then pass the beanbag slowly under their chest, while the hares jump up and crouch back down to pass it. Switch directions, then roles. (R 2–4 rounds)

IN THE KNOW



THE TORTOISE AND HARE JIG. Together with the child make up a dance, alternating fast and slow movements. Have the child make up the fast steps while you make up the slow ones. Sing the "Tortoise and Hare" song as you practice your dance steps. (D 10–15 min.)



Skedaddlers

COMPLEX PHYSICAL PATTERNS rely on automated, foundational movements and a strong sense of internal balance and orientation.

THE TORTOISE RELAY. Divide the children into teams. Set up 2 racing lanes and put a pile of clothes (1 item for each child on the team) at the end of the lane. Give each team 1 small box or suitcase. When you say, "Go," the first player gets on all fours, his teammates put the suitcase on his back, and he must crawl to the end of the lane, put 1 item of clothing in the suitcase, and run back to pass it off to the next player. (R 2–3 times)

THE HARE RELAY. Divide the children into teams. Set up 2 racing lanes and put a pile of clothes (1 item for each child on the team) at the end of the lane. Give each team 1 small box or suitcase. When you say go, the first player puts the suitcase down in front of himself and jumps over it, then picks it up and puts it in front of himself again. He jumps over the suitcase in this fashion all the way to the end of the lane. He must put 1 item of clothing in the suitcase and run back to pass it off to the next player. (R 2–3 times)



HARE HEELS AND TORTOISE TOES. For this game, Tortoise walks on his heels (have the children practice) and Hare walks on his toes (have the children practice). Have the children line up and call out directions such as: "Hare heels forward, sideways, back, stop!" "Tortoise toes back, forward, side, step." When the children gain confidence, have them speed up their hare heels and slow down their tortoise toes! (D 5–10 min.)



SARAH WHITING