

SMARTmoves



SMART stands for Sensory Motor Arousal Regulation Treatment, an innovative mental health therapy for children and adolescents who have experienced complex trauma to help them with emotional, behavioural, and interpersonal regulation.

SMART utilises an array of therapeutic equipment, such as weighted blankets, balance beams, fitness balls, and large cushions, swings in shared play to support children's natural ways of regulating their bodies and their emotions to facilitate attachment-building, and to allow for embodied processing of traumatic experiences.

The therapy blends movement and relationship to regulate arousal states and powerful affect, thereby engaging the subcortical and cortical neural pathways to increase behavioral and psychological integration.

Moreover, SMART widens the child's window of tolerance for both positive and negative emotional states and for interpersonal connection so that healthy development can proceed.

SMART does not rely on language and awareness as an entry point. A coherent narrative and cognitive understanding emerges as a result of fully embodied play engaging the sensory, motor, limbic, and arousal systems for self-exploration. SMART:

- Engages the sensory motor systems, especially the vestibular, proprioceptive, and tactile sensory systems for emotional, psychological, and relational regulation and repair.
- Follows the child's lead while tending to safety and using full body participatory play with the child to work with the unfolding process of developing new skills and processing traumatic experience.
- Uses videotape case review and reflection to support more precise focus on the underlying patterns of behavior, including areas of avoidance and of strength for the child, which informs more tailored interventions and treatment plans.

SMART helps caregivers' windows of tolerance and their self-regulatory capacity for the work with their traumatised children and helps build caregivers' co-regulation skills and rhythms of relationship with their children from the bottom-up.

- The therapy increases caregivers empathy and understanding. Caregivers review and reflect on sessions by watching videotapes and talking to the therapist
- In addition, the approach helps caregivers build strategies and regulation toolboxes that can be easily built into the daily routine at home, in the community, and in educational and residential care settings.



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