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Managing Rough Play

Have you ever said to the tamariki:

*"We don't play like that here because...
We don't want any of you to be hurt
Because we don't want you to hurt each other
Because we don't want you even to pretend to hurt each other
Because guns hurt people
Because it isn't nice
Because I don't like it
Because I said so"*

**Why do we say so?
What are the barriers?**



Some ways forward:

- Evidence-based approach: there is no evidence that violent play leads to real violent behaviour. There is plenty of evidence linking other factors to violent behaviour such as observing/being exposed to real violence – domestic abuse/child abuse, brain injury, drug and alcohol abuse.
- Identify the hazards – yes they might get hurt, hurt others, disrespect others/the environment. Manage the hazards, so they can take risks, and learn. Support Boundaries and structures created by the players themselves, with support from adults (T for time out).
- Consider your environment, where can they play, what can they play with? If they aren't allowed to engage in rough physical play, how else can we meet their needs? Clay slurry, mud fights, balled up newspaper to throw at each other, structured games with physical contact (e.g. London bridges, wheelbarrow races, bullrush, sock races)
- Consider if there is an urge/schema being expressed. Trajectory, Connection, Transformation? This can help you re-direct rough play in an effective, targeted way.
- Trust the children – they can tell the difference between play and real fighting. The draw is the story, the emotional power, not the literal meaning. Ask them, 'do you like this game or is it getting too rough/scary?' and TRUST THEIR ANSWER.
- If you feel you can't trust them (when there is trauma, volatility) play along, be the baddie, engage in active social coaching.

What are the benefits of play fighting?