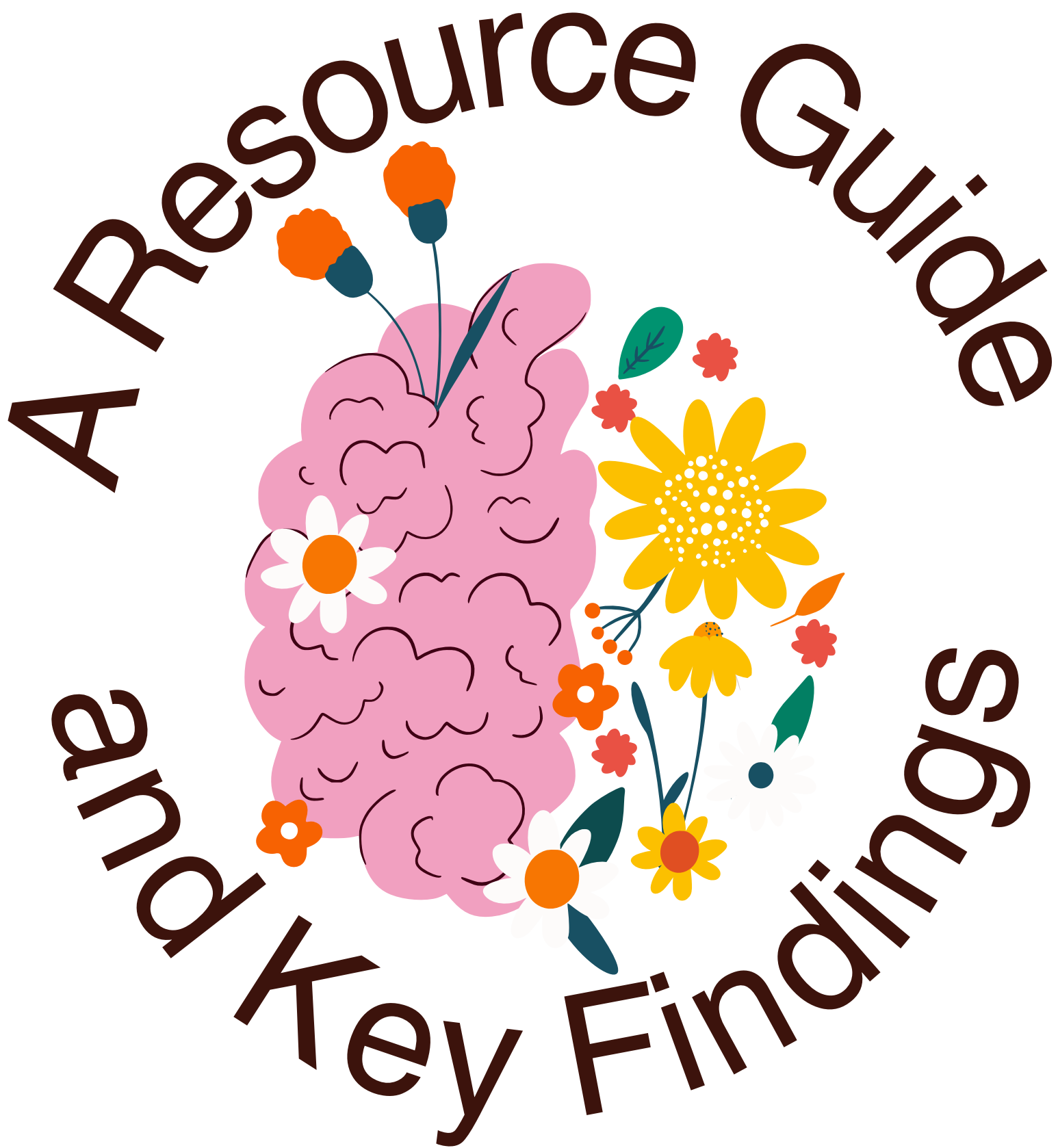


HOW ART-BASED LEARNING SUPPORTS NEURODIVERSE CHILDREN



For Educators and Caregivers

By Sarabi Outerbridge-Dill

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HOW TO NAVIGATE THE GUIDE

The following symbols appear throughout the Guide, providing access to even more information



Find book suggestions to read.



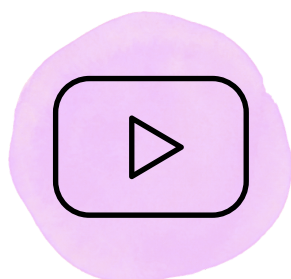
Scan the QR or click the links to podcasts, social media accounts and blogs.



Click the link or scan the QR code to find helpful apps.



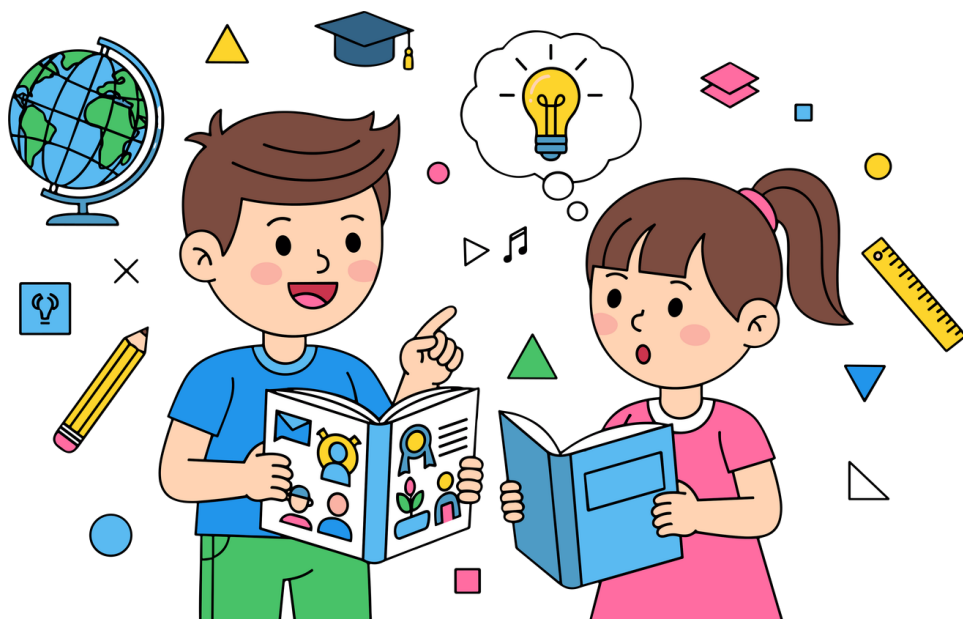
Scan the QR code to access websites and purchase items, or click the link to read articles and view activities.



Click the icon to access videos.

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

This Guide was created to share the findings of my rapid review on art-based learning and neurodiverse children in a way that is accessible to a broader audience. The Guide is designed for educators and caregivers who are seeking practical and inclusive ways to support communication, emotional regulation, participation and belonging through art-based experiences.



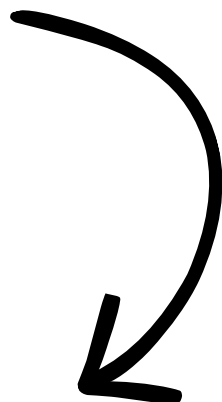
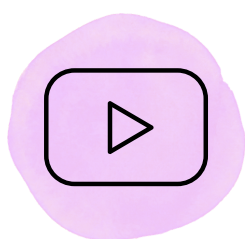
The Guide Includes:

- Summary of key findings
- Practical strategies
- Articles, websites and YouTube videos to explore
- Apps, tools and activity ideas for practice
- Quotes from child theorists and therapists

WHY THIS TOPIC MATTERS

Many neurodiverse children need support with communication, emotional regulation, social interaction and participation in learning in order to function well in society. Art-based learning provides children with ways in which to express themselves when words are not enough. My study explores how art-based and play-based approaches can support children's development and inclusion. (Berkovits et al., 2017; Frey et al., 2019; Rubin, 2011)

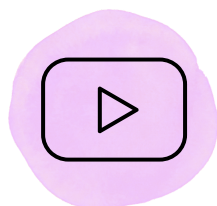
Click me to watch



Why This Matters in Practice?

When children are provided with flexible and creative ways in which to express themselves, they may feel safer, more understood and more able and more willing to participate.

Click me to watch



Scan me to access blog



Art speaks where words are unable to explain.”

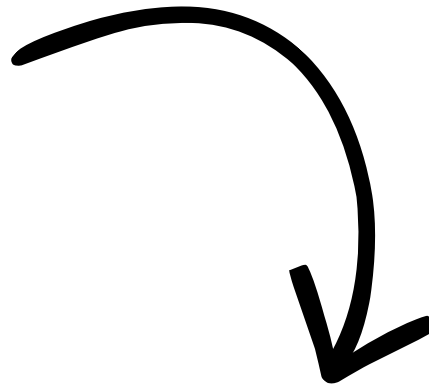
~ PAM HOLLAND

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This rapid review examines five studies published between 2020 and 2025. The studies, focusing on neurodiverse children between the ages of 4 and 13, explore how art-based and play-based approaches support communication, emotional regulation, social skills, motor development and participation.



Click me to listen



Click the link to read each study

- [Study_1](#) 
- [Study_2](#) 
- [Study_3](#) 
- [Study_4](#) 
- [Study_5](#) 

My research asks:

1. How does art-based learning support neurodiverse children?
2. How can art-based approaches be used in learning environments?



“Play is the work of the child.”

~ MARIA MONTESSORI

KEY FINDING 1

Art Provides Children with More Ways in which to Communicate

Art, play and creative activities can help children to express feelings, ideas and needs without relying solely on verbal communication. This can be helpful for children who communicate differently. (Mareza et al., 2025; Vogel et al., 2025; Zelcek & Pouya, 2024)



Scan to purchase me

Try This:

- Offer drawing materials during sharing time.
- Allow children to create what they are feeling.



KEY FINDING 2

Art-Based Learning Can Support Emotional Regulation

Across the studies considered, arts-based and play-based approaches are linked with positive changes in emotional regulation, behaviour and participation. Children show progress in managing emotions, engaging with others and taking part in activities more successfully. (Daniel et al., 2025; Schottelkorb et al., 2020; Vogel et al., 2025; Zelcek & Pouya, 2024)

Click to read me



Smiling Mind in Primary Schools

The Smiling Mind Primary School Program is co-designed with psychologists and educators. It builds social and emotional learning and mental fitness across the whole school community, with curriculum-aligned lessons and tailored training for...

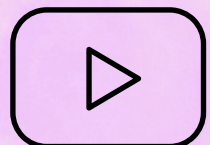
 Smiling Mind

Try This:



- Create a calm down corner and art basket for regulation breaks

**Click me to watch
and participate
along with a video
to help with self
regulation in the
classroom**



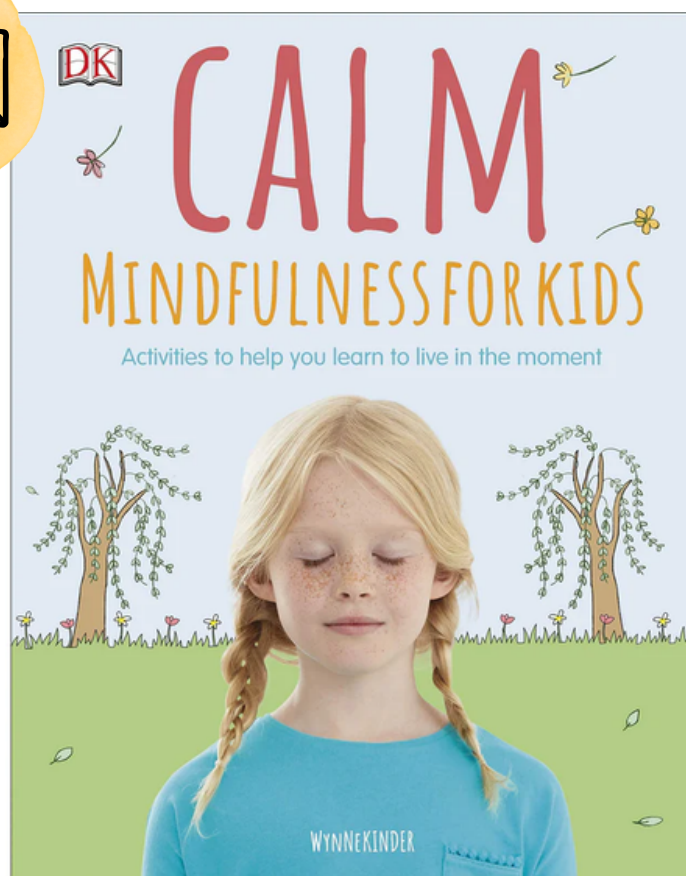
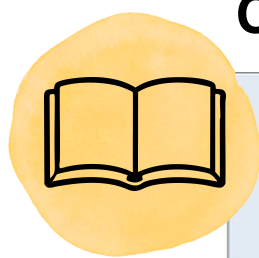
EMOTIONAL REGULATION ART-BASED ACTIVITIES

Mindfulness Activity Mat

Mindfulness Activity Pack



Click the Book to Purchase



“The only behaviour you can control is your own.”

~ B. F. SKINNER

KEY FINDING 3

Supportive Adults Make a Difference

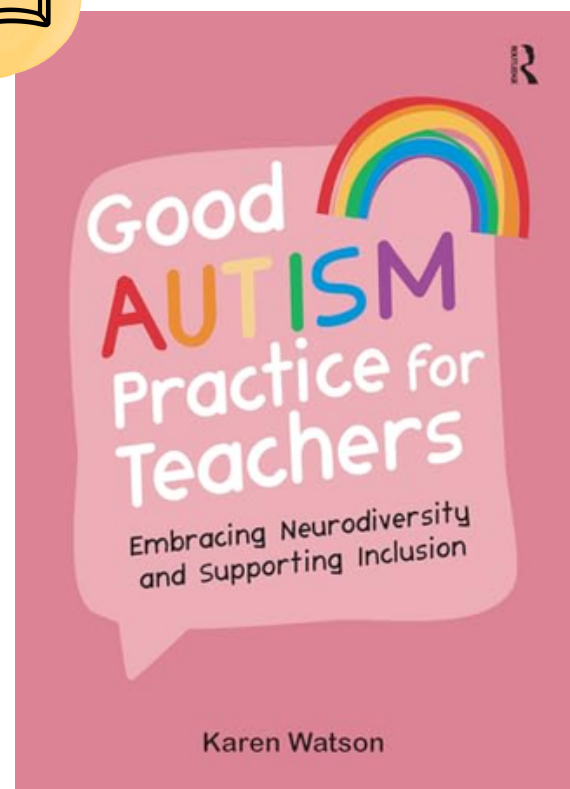
The five studies reveal that children often do better when trusted adults are present to guide, encourage and co-regulate with them. Teachers, therapists and caregivers help to create the safety and support children needed to express themselves and stay engaged. (Daniel et al., 2025; Mareza et al., 2025; Schottelkorb et al., 2020; Zelcek & Pouya, 2024)

[Click me to read the Article](#)



Try This:

- Stay nearby during art time
- Follow the child's lead
- Use calm, simple language
- Respond to cues without pressure



Click the Book to Purchase

KEY FINDING 4

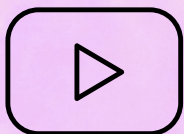
Structure and Flexibility Both Matter

Art-based activities work best when they are predictable, but also flexible enough to meet each child's needs. This includes using routines, adapting materials and allowing different ways for children to participate. (Daniel et al., 2025; Mareza et al., 2025; Schottelkorb et al., 2020; Vogel et al., 2025; Zelcek & Pouya, 2024)

**Scan to view and purchase
adaptive art supplies**



Click me to watch



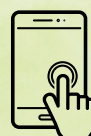
Click me for Free UDL Resources

**Click me to download UDL
Choice Boards**



Try This:

- Offer a visual sequence for the activity
- Utilize adaptive tools for sensory and motor needs
- Incorporate UDL principles and tools



KEY FINDING 5

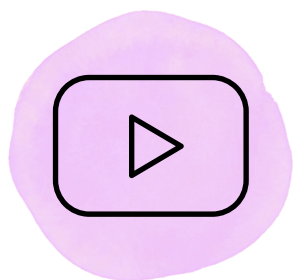
Art Can Support Inclusion

Art-based learning can help to create environments where children feel included, capable and understood. It offers different ways to participate, which can make classrooms and other learning spaces more responsive to children's strengths and needs. (Mareza et al., 2025; Vogel et al., 2025)

Scan me to access blog



Click me to watch



Try This:

- Use materials that reflect different identities, abilities and interests

TAKE ACTION INTO PRACTICE

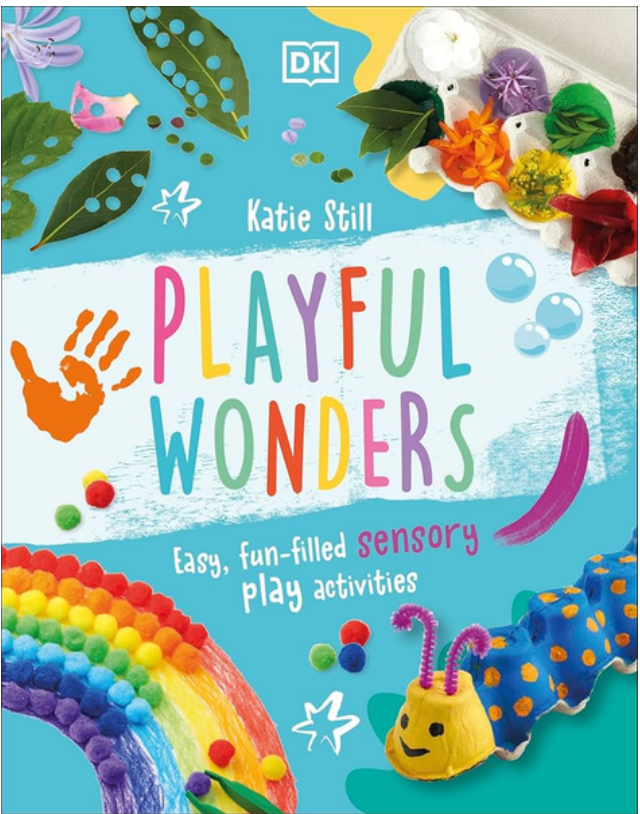
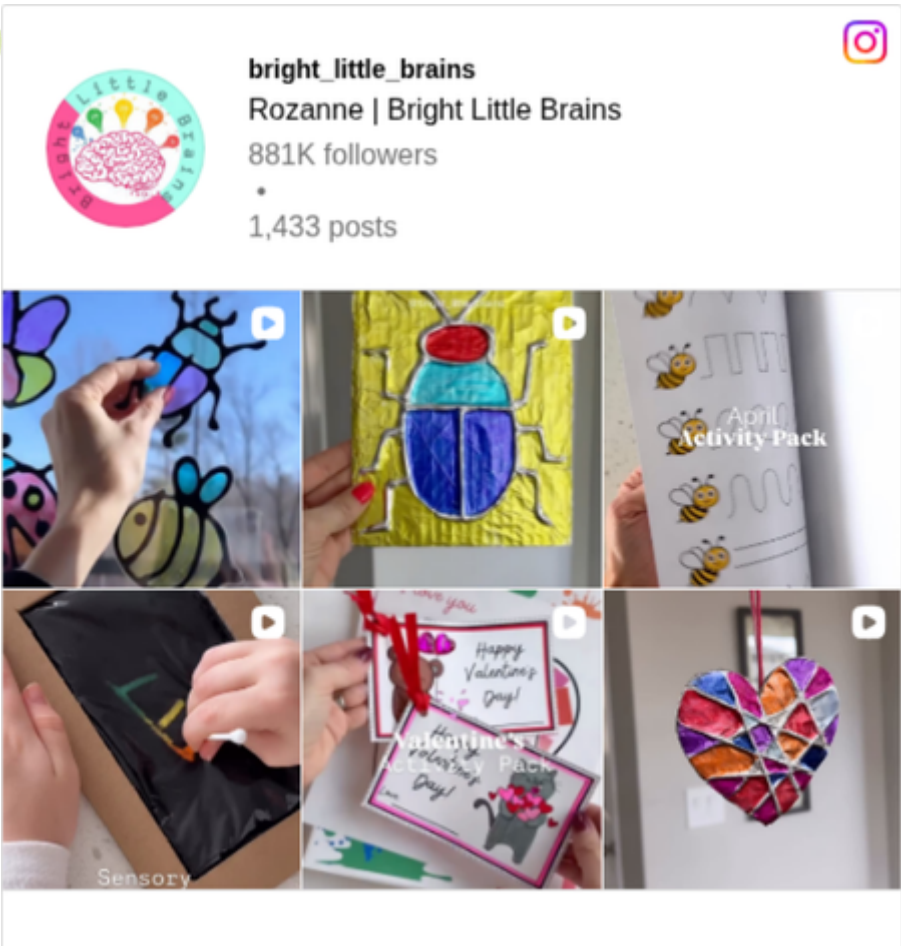
What Does this Mean for Practice?



Art-based learning can be a support for communication, emotional well-being, participation and belonging. These findings suggest that art can help educators and caregivers to create more responsive and inclusive learning environments. (Daniel et al., 2025; Mareza et al., 2025; Schottelkorb et al., 2020; Vogel et al., 2025; Zelcek & Pouya, 2024)

ACTIVITY IDEAS AND DIY SUPPORTS

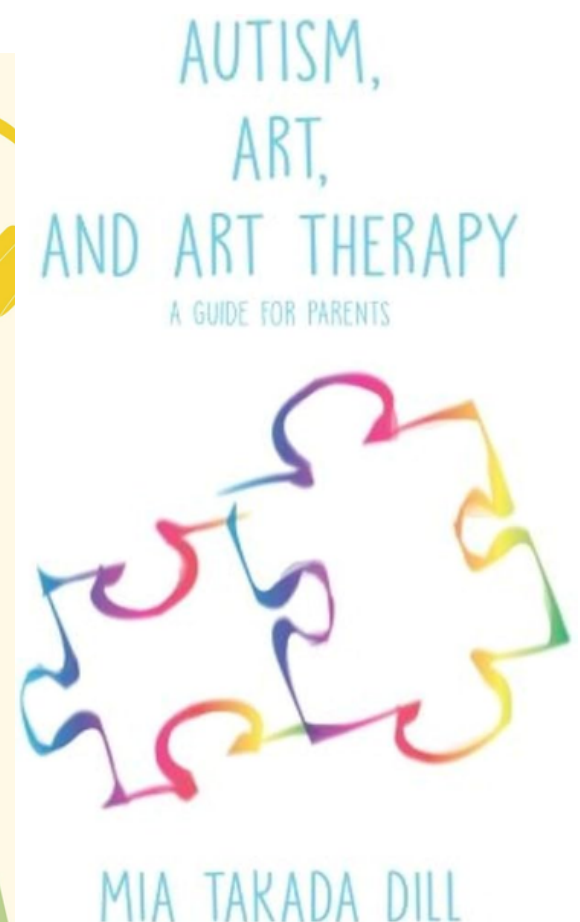
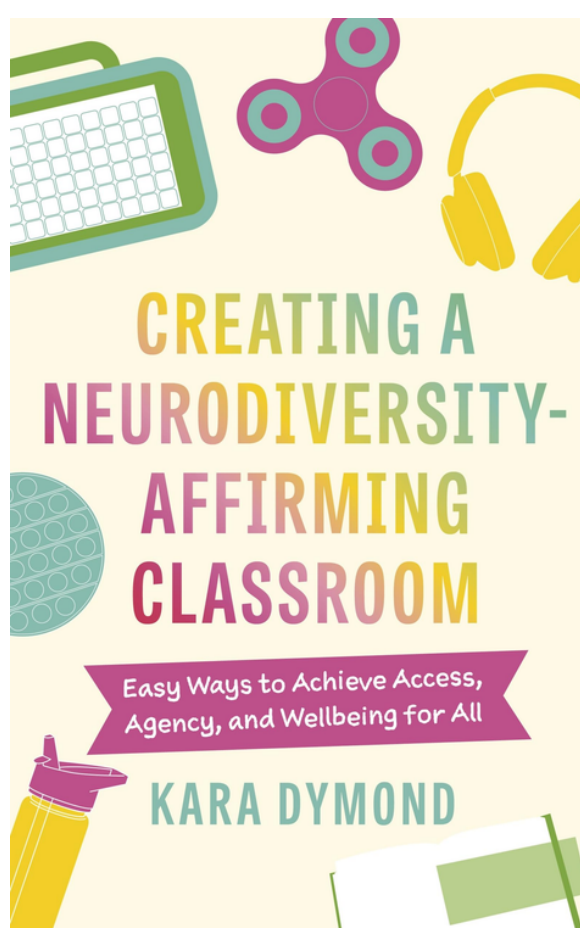
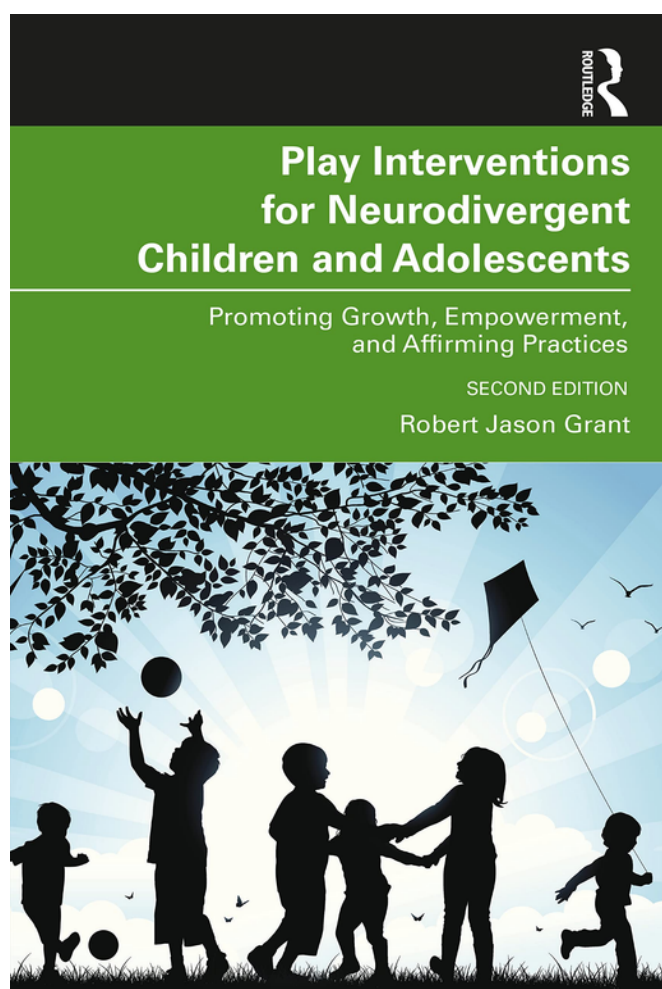
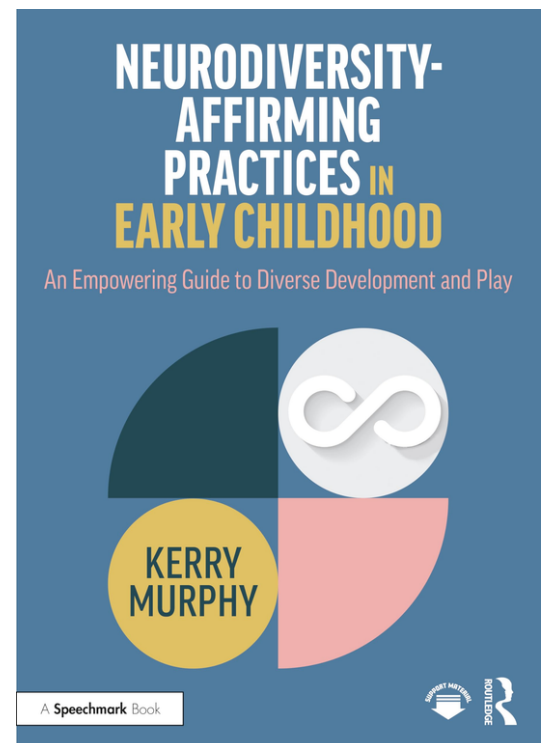
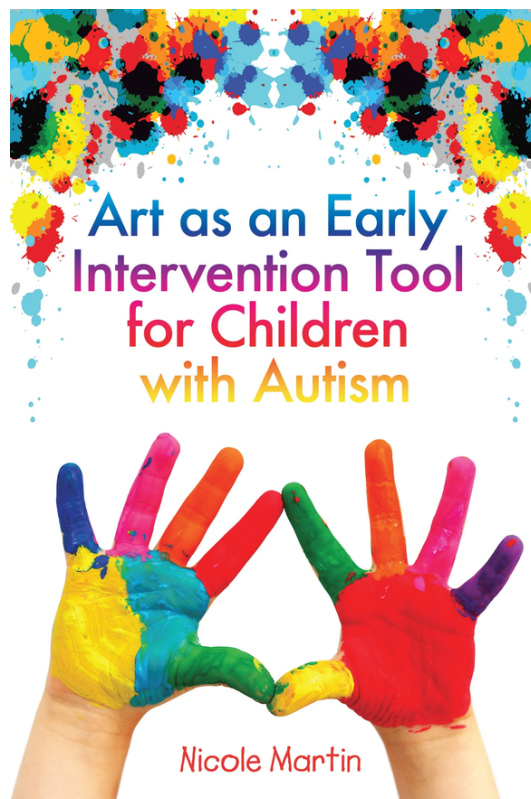
Click on the Activity to access the link for purchase or click the social media page for inspiration





TEACHER RESOURCE BOOKS

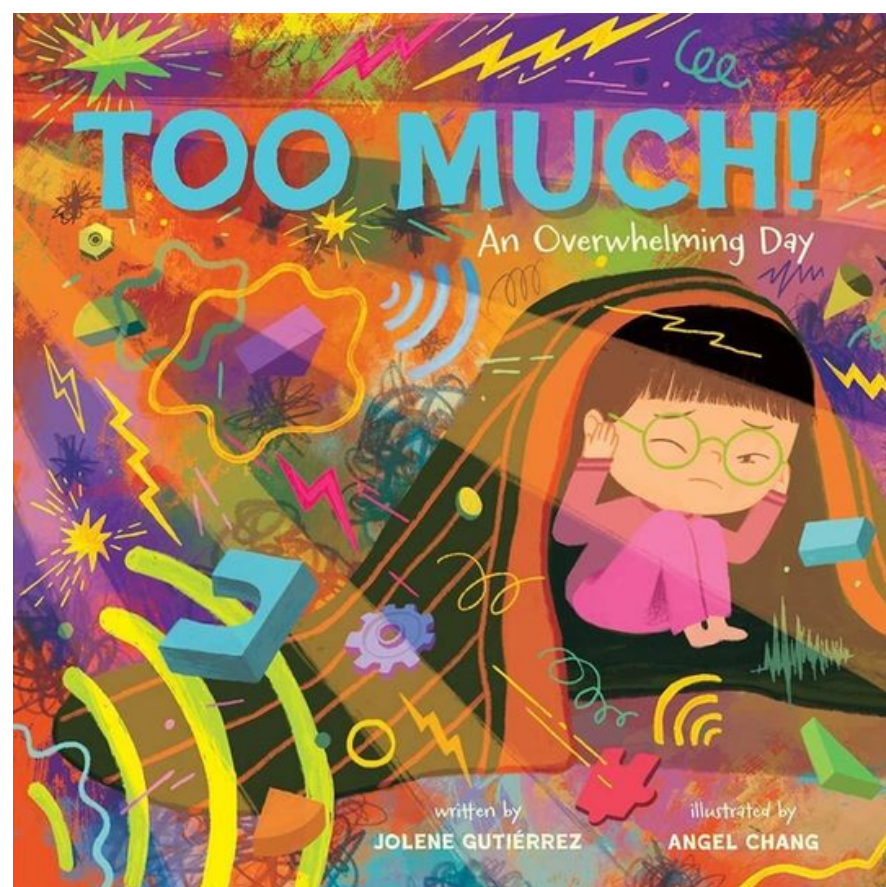
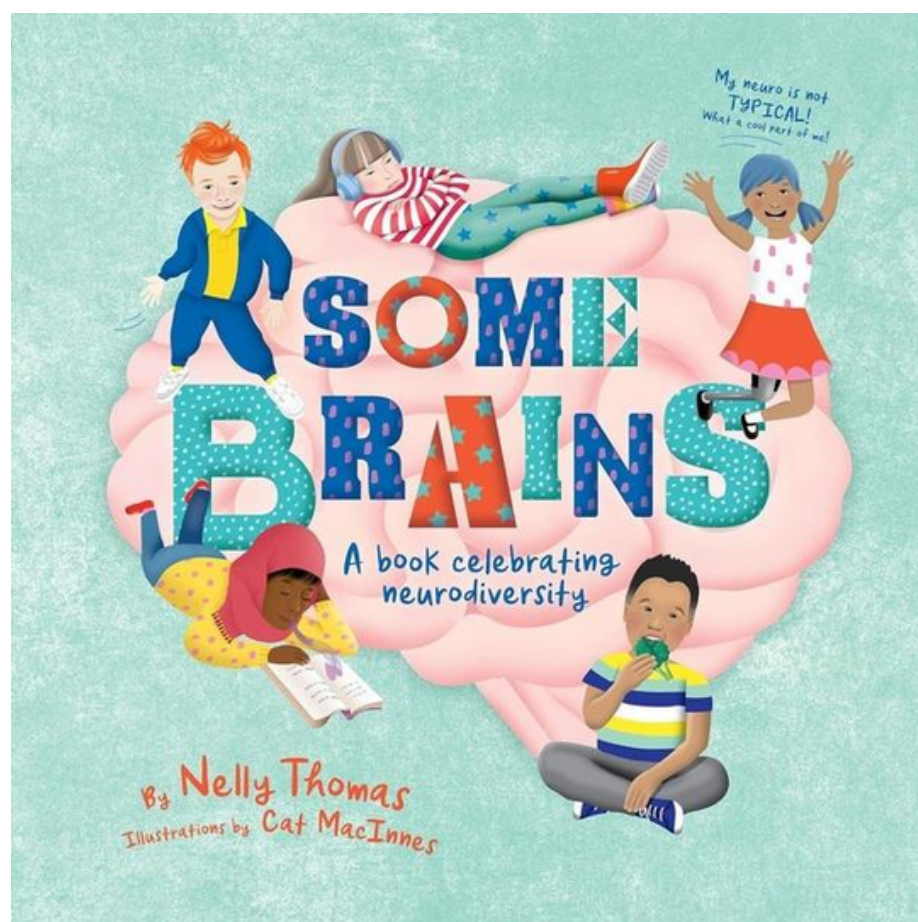
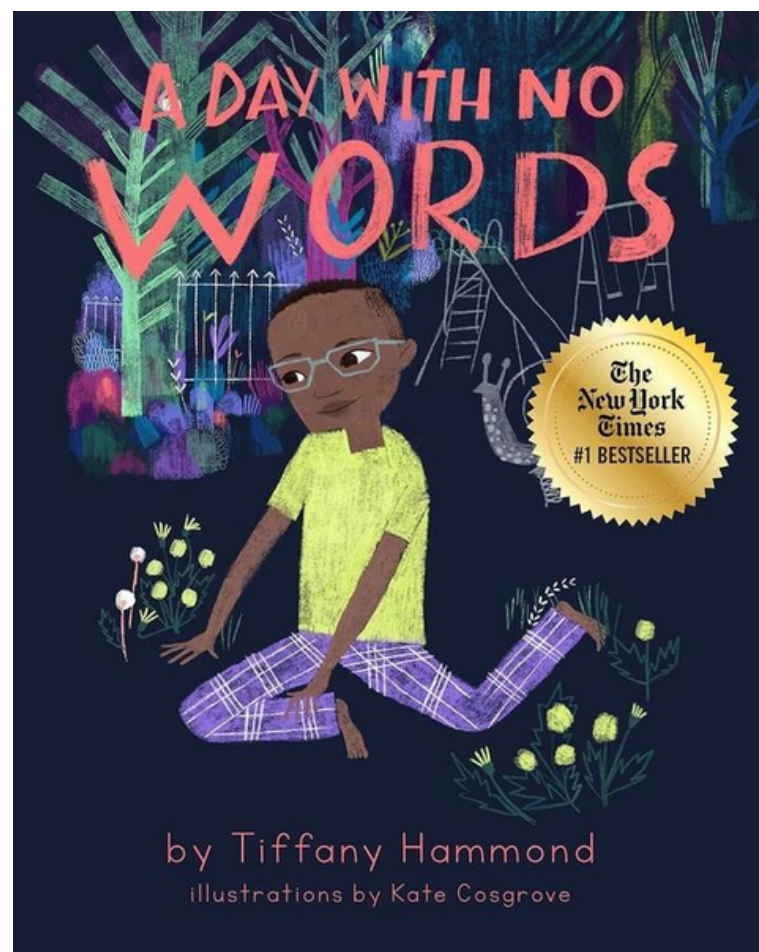
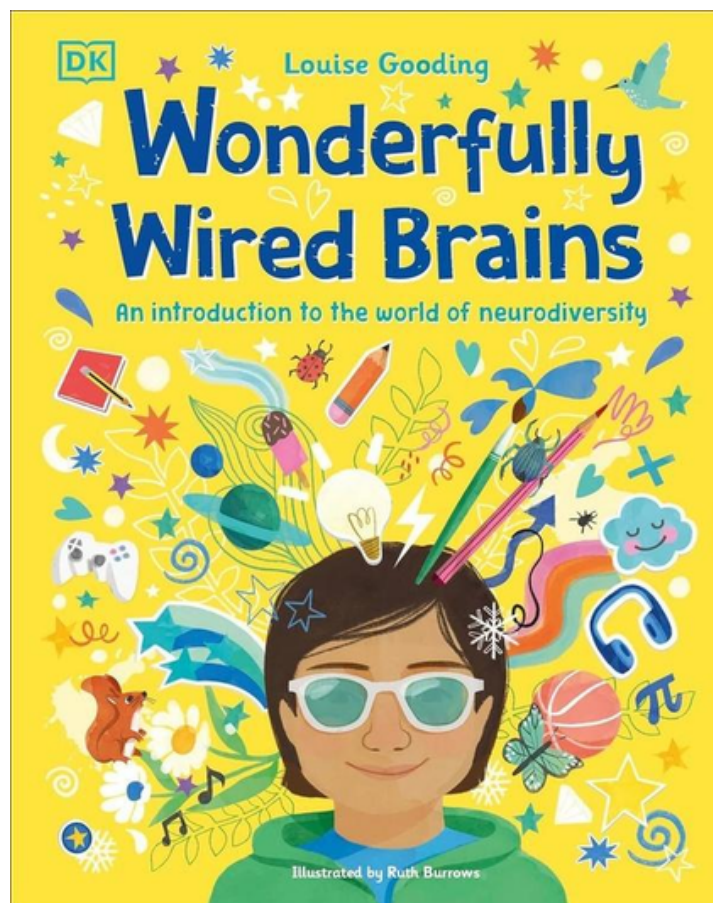
Click on the book to access the link for purchase





BOOKS FOR THE CLASSROOM

Click on the book to access the link for purchase



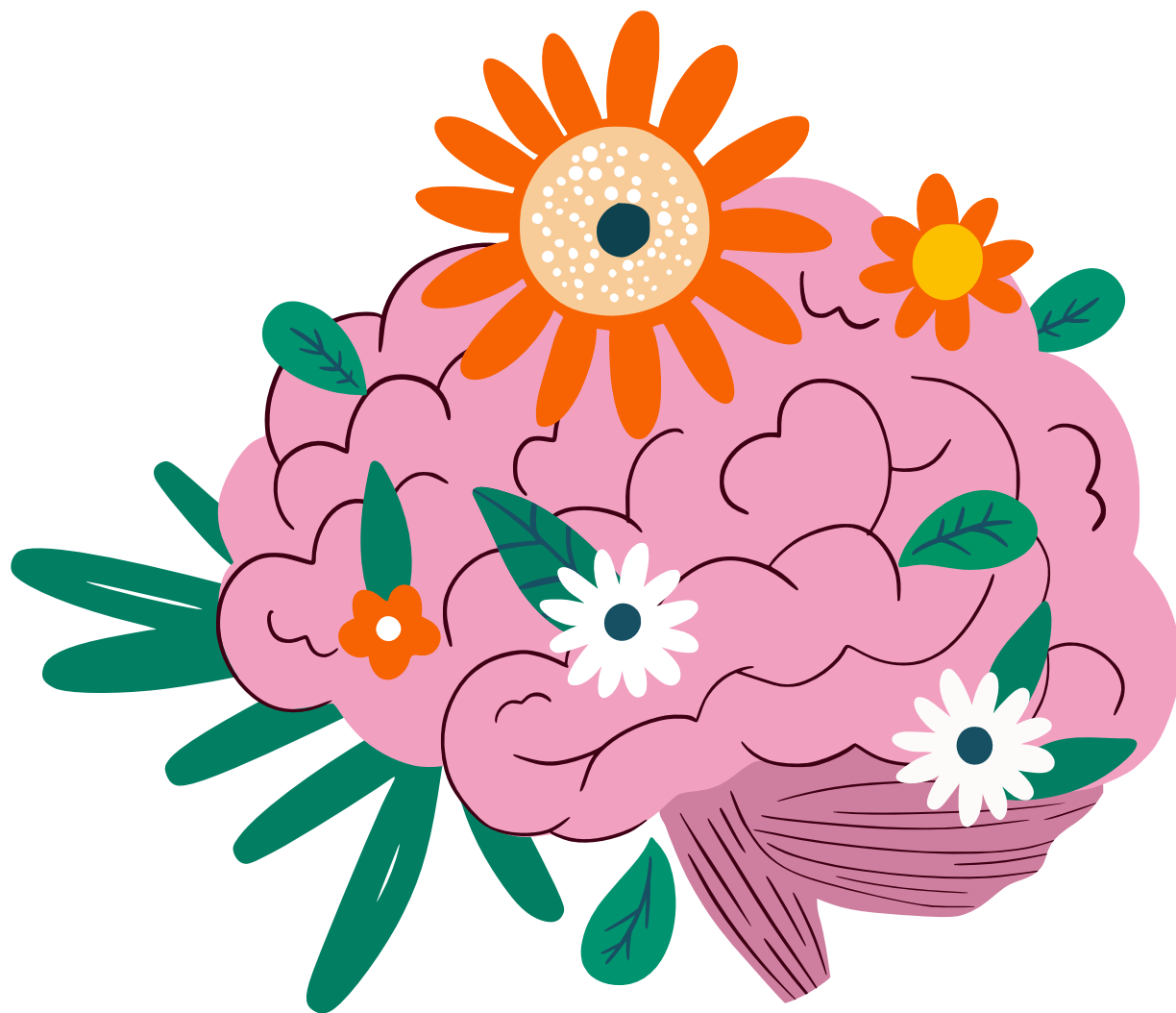
THANK YOU

Thank you for taking the time to explore this Guide!



It is my hope that the findings and resources identified in the Guide will encourage educators and caregivers to recognize and appreciate the importance of art-based and play-based learning.

REMEMBER!



**“Art can permeate the very deepest part of us,
where no words exist.”**

~ EILEEN MILLER

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