Critical Core:
The Power of Intentional Gaming

What is Critical Core?

A Social-Skills Intervention TTRPG.
Developed by therapists and educators at Game to Grow, it is a tabletop game that invites children to enter a shared world of fantasy, consequence, and social problem-solving.

Built on the Open Gaming License (OGL).
The system uses a simplified version of DGD 5e mechanics (d20, core stats) to make the game accessible to non-gamer facilitators like therapists and parents.

Moving Beyond "Masking."
Unlike traditional programs, Critical Core focuses on helping players grow as their authentic selves through play-for-play's sake.

The Science: The DIR/Floortime Model

The DIR Framework
Stands for Developmental (D); individual-differences (I), and Relationship-based (R), teaucing on the child's natural motivation for play.

Creating "Loops of Interaction"
Facilitators use the child's interests to create increasing loops of social interaction, helping them develop skills that are more flexible and empowering than surface-level behavior training.

Individual Differences & Accommodations
The framework encourages environmental accommodations, such as atiowing sensory breaks or using alternative methods of communication (AAC).

The Role of the Facilitator

The "Enthusiasm Doctrine"
A modification of the "Role of Cool," this principle dictates that a facilitator can bend or break any rule to cultivate the player's enthusiasm and engagement.
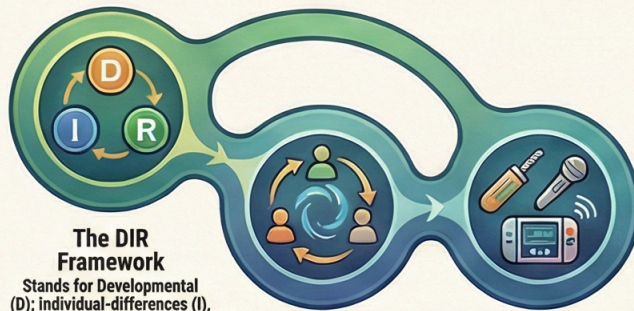
D.O.T.S. Narrative System
A simplified madule design where every encounter is a two-page spread, removing the need for facilitators to filg through complex rulebooks during sessions.

"Therapeutic Chaos"
Facilitators create a safe space where players can take risks, such as a child playing a "reckless" character to practice thinking through consequences without real-world risk.

The Physics of "Critical Mass"

Subcritical vs. Supercritical
Subcritical players may be aoctally rsolated.

Reaching Criticality
In physics, critical mass is the minimum material needed to sustain a chain recetiors in this game, it is the moment a plaser's social interaction becomes self-sustaining and joyful.

While the game aims to push them toward a "supercritical" state where social interactions grow and multiply naturally.

The 5 Core Capacities

Regulation (Capacity A)
The most important capacity; the ability for a player to remain calm, regulated, and present in the room with others.

Collaboration (Capacity B)
Moving beyond cooperation to seeing others as a source of joy and a meaningful resource for solving shared problems.

Planning (Capacity C)
Balancing impulsive action with logical reasoning and critical thinking to succeed in-game.

Perspective (Capacity D)
Building the capacity to aek the world through another's eyes, which is essential for developing empathy and personal reflection.
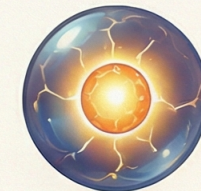
Pretend Play (Capacity E)
The integration of all capacities; when players care mere about meaningful interaction then specific rules, their ability to grow improves tremendously.