

SENSORY ACTIVITIES LIST

It is important to discuss ANY sensory activity with your Occupational Therapist before implementing it into your child's daily routine. An OT can assess the child's arousal level and make appropriate recommendations.

VESTIBULAR (Movement): *The vestibular system affects balance, muscle tone, equilibrium responses, the ability to use both sides of the body together, coordination of the head, neck and eye movements, auditory language, and plays a role in arousal. Vestibular stimulus involves the movement of head through space.*

- **CALMING VESTIBULAR INPUT:** most often utilized when a child is over-aroused (decreased attention, moving around the room with little or no purpose, unable to follow simple and familiar directions, self-abusive behaviors, self-stimulating behaviors).
 - Linear (back and forth) movements on suspended equipment or those that provide a slow rocking motion.
 - Proprioceptive activities can be used with calming vestibular activities to further help the child to calm.
- **EXCITATORY VESTIBULAR INPUT:** most often utilizes excitatory vestibular input when a child appears under aroused. (i.e. listless, floppy, unmotivated).
 - Fast movements on suspended equipment and may include quick changes of direction and speed
 - Activities that have a rotary or orbital movement component.

Vestibular Activities:

- Rocking in a rocking chair
- Slow forward/backward movement (alternating between touching toes/standing up)
- Rolling or tumbling
- Move & Sit cushions
- Jumping rock, hopping up & down or on playing on a trampoline
- Scrub floor (real or pretend)
- Run/Jog
- Ride bike
- Dance
- Do yard or house work
- Stretch/shake body
- Rolling (make sure head is uncovered and clear)
- Swinging- platform, hammock, net, horse, inner tube, tire, glider, playground swing in linear direction
- Scooter board in linear direction
- Wagon rides
- Bounce on mini trampoline, cushion, mattress (with supervision)
- Marching
- Imitate head movement
- Movement activities/exercise
- Riding on moving equipment (wheelchair, elevator, car)
- Climbing up and down steps
- Therapy ball/hippity hop ball-bounce, lay over it and roll (with supervision)
- Roller skating/blading
- Sledding
- Lie on couch or chair with head down and look up at the ceiling.
- Slide and climb on playground equipment
- Jump rope
- Log rolling on carpet, grass, flat surfaces, or down inclines
- Pretend "swimming" on carpet or floor mat with textures trying to pull or push self around

PROPRIOCEPTION (Deep Touch & Heavy Work): *The proprioceptive system gives the nervous system input on the position of muscles, joints and tendons. This is important as it provides the person with information on how far to reach, how much pressure, where we are in space, and what our body scheme is. Most proprioceptive activities are CALMING and should be provided if a child is over-aroused (decreased attention, moving around the room with little or no purpose, unable to follow simple and familiar directions, self-abusive behaviors, and self-stimulating behavior).*

Deep Tactile (Massage) Activities: *Deep tactile activities involve firm, consistent, rhythmic touch to the body. This input produces a calming effect to the neurological system.*

- Firm Massage: with hands or object (massage ball) to back and/or arms
- Wrapping: use of materials that can be wrapped around the child (blanket, etc.)
- Snuggle Area: bean bags, weighted blankets or large pillows/stuff animals that the child can burrow into
- Brushing protocol (see OT)

Proprioceptive (Heavy Work) Activities: *"Heavy work" activities are any task that requires strength, endurance and sustain activation of the muscles of the body. These activities produce an organizing effect on the neurological system through helping the brain understand the position of the body in space.*

- Push-ups (floor, wall or chair)
- Sustain movement (yoga/Pilates)

- Climbing, crawling or any other gross motor movement.
- Carrying materials in the classroom
- Helping to move classroom furniture
- Pushing/pulling boxes or carts filled with materials (text books, etc.)
- Working with resistive materials (i.e. sweeping, vacuuming, ringing out sponges, erasing a blackboard, finding hidden items in playdoh).
- Squeezing water bottles, putty, paint bottles, stress balls, etc.
- Rolling a large ball over a child's body
- People "Sandwich" (children lying on top of each other can add blankets or furniture cushions or pillows or bean bags to create a "sandwich")
- Play catch with large ball or heavy ball
- Animal Walks
 - Frog jump -Squat on the floor, placing hands on floor in front of you. Move both hands forward, then bring feet up to hands in jumping motion (remain in squatting position)
 - Bear Walk -With hands and feet on floor, move right arm and leg forward simultaneously, and then move left arm and leg. If this is too difficult, try it on hands and knees.
 - Inchworm -Squat on floor with hands in front. Keeping feet stable, walk hands forward as far as you can so that you're stretched out. Then keep hands stable and walk feet up to hands back to squatting position.
- Play wrestling
- Marital Arts
- Horseback riding
- Making "snow angels" (with or without snow)
- Theraband stretches
- Therapy putty or modeling clay
- Weighted backpack, fanny pack, wrist weights, or weighted vest at 20-30 minute intervals.
- Pushing or carrying heavy objects -wagon, shopping cart, grocery bags, laundry basket, books, etc.
- Monkey Bars on playground that he/she can hang from
- Stacking chairs at the end of the day
 - Elephant walk -Bend over with arms dangling toward floor. Clasp hands together to form trunk. Maintain position while walking, swinging trunk from side to side.
 - Kangaroo jump -Squat on floor, hands at sides, raise up and jump forward, sinking back into squatting position as you land.
 - Crab walk -Lean back and put hands on floor (supine with buttocks off floor) walk backwards, using hands and feet alternately.
 - Duck walk- Squat on floor with hands at sides. Remain in position while walking (waddling) forward.

TACTILE (Touch): *Activities that have a tactile component are frequently utilized in therapy as part of a "multisensory approach." By bringing in a tactile component, a child is more likely to remember and sequence the activity more efficiently.*

- **EXCITATORY TACTILE INPUT:** "Light" touch (including tickle, itch, and scratch) is excitatory, especially to a sensory defensive child, and **should be avoided at all times.**
- **CALMING TACTILE INPUT:** "Firm" touch and is commonly called "brushing" or "Wilbarger Technique." **A brushing protocol is VERY specialized, and should only be performing by a trained individual.**

Tactile (Touch) Activities: *The sense of "touch" can be very alerting to the system. As long as the child does not exhibit any aversive reactions to light touch, it can be used to "awaken" the senses.*

- Tactile centers: a sandbox, bean or rice bin, or a ball pit
- Tactile activities: finger paints, clay, shaving cream, sand
- Exploration centers: centers for exploring "rough", "soft", "smooth", "sharp", etc.
- Rub child's body all over "With towels.
- Rub lotion or powder on child while identifying body parts.
- Pretend to paint body with clean paintbrush, and then rub part off with towel.
- Water play -pouring water on child.
- Find hidden shapes and objects (i.e. small game pieces, coins, buttons) in dry beans or rice in a tub or container
- Playing with foam soaps in bathtub.
- Papier-mâché
- Make collages using fabric pieces, yarns, and papers
- "Feely-Meely" game: use bag or box filled with a variety of objects, then reach in and try to identify.
- Chalkboard: cover with chalk, and then rub out objects, numbers, letters, and shapes. One could also

- use chalk on carpet squares -then "erase" with hands for additional tactile input
- . Playdoh ® Activities
 - Pinch off small pieces between thumb and index finger
 - Roll out long snakes on the table or between palms.
 - Make different size balls of play dough on the table, between two palms, between two fingers in one hand.
 - Use rolling pins and cookie cutters to cut out shapes.
 - Place pegs, beads, blocks, and puzzle pieces to pick out and complete.
 - Make bracelets and rings to place on hands and feet.

ORAL MOTOR: *Oral motor activities help children and adults to calm, focus, and concentrate, and can be utilized either immediately before fine motor task or during fine motor tasks to help the child come to midline and concentrate.*

Oral Motor Activities

- Blowing bubbles
- Blow Ping-Pong or cotton ball across table with straw.
- Tugging/biting washcloth, therapy tubing.
- Crunchy snacks.
- Blow toys (harmonicas, windmills, Kazoos, whistles)
- Latex-free balloons
- Chewing gum
- Vibrating toothbrushes
- Resistive sucking (sports bottle, drink boxes, straw, crazy-straws, thicker liquids)
- Chewy foods: popcorn, crackers, bagel, beef jerky, fruit rollups, tootsie rolls, starburst fruit chews, and pretzels
- Chewing crushed ice, fruit (non-sugar) Popsicles, frozen bananas
- Suck on sugarless hard candy

AUDITORY: Noise can be very distracting to the system and should be used in brief, structured instances. Combining movement (dance) with auditory input can work well in alerting the system, and can also enhance learning.

Auditory Activities

- Listening games: Simon Says, Mother May I
- Hand games: Rockin’ Robin, Miss Mary Mack, Itsy Bitsy Spider, etc.
- Books on tape
- Music
- Musical Instruments
- Therapeutic Listening Protocol ® (see OT)

