

Calming and Behavior-Regulating Activities

General Guidelines: Allow the child to determine the intensity of sensory input and the length of time they can tolerate. Never force a child to participate in a sensory activity, especially if fearful.

Proprioception Input – Activities that promote active use of the muscles and joints to work against resistance, e.g. when pushing or pulling. This input tends to be calming and help organize thought processes. Also helps improve strength, coordination, and body awareness.

- Jump on a trampoline, mattress, pillows
- Stretch thick elastic or Theraband
- Fill up toy trucks with blocks and push
- Crash into pillows or bean bag chairs
- Push cart or laundry basket filled with heavy objects or another child
- Play running and jumping games
- Play parachute games
- Make a cardboard house with small doors the child squeezes through
- Bounce on a bouncy ball with handle
- ‘Drive’ a heavy box around cones
- Use spray bottles to clean or for crafts
- Climb cushions, pillows, mats, bean bag chairs, rock wall, large inflated cushions
- Walk uphill, upstairs or up ramps
- Swing from trapeze bar or monkey bars
- Squeeze fidget toys
- Carry books to another part of room
- Chores such as wipe counters and tables, sweep floors, push chairs under tables
- Push against a wall or adults hands
- Lift or pull heavy items
- Ride toys that have pedals
- Climb a play structure
- Pull wagon filled with toys or another child
- Play in sandbox with damp, heavy sand
- Climb under/over cushions; obstacle courses
- Construct a play areas with large boxes, cushions, pillows, and blankets
- Catch, roll or throw a heavy ball
- Color large pictures on sidewalk with chalk
- Do art activities at an easel or paper on wall
- Fill pillow case with stuffed animals and pull, push and carry them
- Pull other children around on blanket
- Open and hold doors for others
- Crab and bear walk; army crawl
- Fill watering can to water plants, grass, flowers
- Do activities such as simple gymnastics, karate, and dancing

Vestibular Input – Activities that provide movement of the head. Vestibular movement tends to be calming if slow and rhythmic, but alerting if fast and arrhythmic (however some children may respond in the opposite way). These activities may also help muscle tone, postural stability and balance.

- Swinging, sliding, scooter board, tire swing
- Sit and lean head back all the way
- The Egg – lie on back, hold knees to chest and roll back and forth
- Large ball activities:
 - Lying on belly - roll child forward and back, e.g. to knock over tower, do a puzzle, throw bean bags into a basket
 - Lying on back – roll child back to pick up items from floor and drop in basket
- Rocking back and forth in a rocker
- Ride tricycles and riding toys
- Twirling, running, log-rolling and jumping
- Blanket swing – have two adults hold two corners of a blanket and rhythmically swing child back and forth while lying in the blanket

Olfactory Input – Provide smells to alert or calm. Use all natural extracts or essence.

- Alerting: pine, citrus, peppermint
- Calming: vanilla, banana, coconut

Deep Pressure Tactile Input – Activities that involve firm pressure over the skin. Deep pressure helps to calm, organize behaviors, and promote body awareness.

- Firm, long bear hugs, preferably initiated by child
- Pickle sandwich –Child lays on his belly. Ask him what he wants on his sandwich as you firmly roll a ball over his legs, arms, and back to “add” each ingredient.
- Give firm but gentle squeezes down arms
- Have child rub lotion on arms and legs
- Let child tightly wrap up in a blanket or quilt
- Hide under a bean bag chair or crawl around with a bean bag chair on her back like a turtle.
- Rub arms and legs briskly with a towel, e.g. after water play

Oral Input – provides proprioception input through the jaw muscles; helps develop oral motor skills

- Eat chewy or crunchy foods, e.g. dried fruit; gummi bears; Starburst; licorice; beef jerky; bagels; string cheese; gum; raisins; soft pretzels; crunchy pretzels; popcorn; granola bars.
- Resistive sucking: drink through a curly straw or sports bottle with a long straw; suck lollipops or popsicles; drink milkshakes or applesauce through a straw; eat peanut butter off a spoon.
- Blowing activities: wind instruments, bubbles, whistles, ‘snake’ party favors, blow thinned paint across paper with a straw, Blowpens, blow bubbles in water/soap mixture with a straw
- Provide use of a Chewy Tube or oxygen tubing tied into a “necklace”.

Fine Motor Activities

- Play Doh, especially using tools and extruder to increase resistance and require muscle use
- Paint with squeeze bottles or squirt bottles
- String beads onto pipe cleaners
- Have child remove 1/4” beads placed half-in or completely hidden in clay
- Draw with broken crayons instead of markers
- Use hand fidgets during circle or story time: beanie animals; small squishy balls; balloons stuffed with flour or sand; Koosh balls; Silly-putty
- Chalk pictures by dipping chalk in water and coloring on black construction paper
- Stamping – large stamps especially
- Cut or tear heavy paper
- Spread modeling clay in tray, ~ ¼ to ½ inch depth. Draw designs, pictures, letters with large diameter pencil
- Color on sandpaper

Environment and Routines

- Use a voice that is calm and quiet; strike a triangle or turn off lights for attention
- Keep room decorations simple; use similar background colors on bulletin boards
- Use soothing music or no music if there is noise from others talking
- Provide a cozy corner with fidget toys, pillows, bean bags, quilt, dimmed light
- Make clear traffic patterns around the classroom so movement is easier and safer.
- Reduce clutter in room, store toys neatly in bins; hang curtains over toy shelves
- Provide seating that fits the children so feet touch ground, box, or stool to provide support
- Use low lighting, natural lighting, or floor lamps to counteract flicker of overhead lights
- Sit on cushions or hold sand pillows on lap
- Review a visual picture schedule each day; use Velcro on pictures for easy changes in routine

