

### Class based sensory motor activities

Using sensory motor activities with the whole class is a great way of helping kids keep their attention throughout the day.

These activities can help **all** children be more aware of their bodies, more aware of themselves in space and help to keep their systems alert and ready for learning.

As with any new activity, children may initially struggle to engage, the more we use activities the better they will get and the more confident they will feel. They may also start to see the link between movement and attention for themselves and start to use appropriate strategies for self-regulation.

Over time you should see improved attention, less fidgeting and hopefully happier kids. We hope you will also see a reduction in 'inappropriate seeking behaviours', such as noise making, fidgeting, leaving the class and becoming tired and disengaged.

Obviously sensory motor strategies are not a cure-all but they do help all of us be more focused and self-aware.

Do bear with the silliness and initial resistance, this is to be expected, after a few weeks, kids should engage with these activities and even start to enjoy them.

Some sensory information can "overload" and cause a child to over-react to sensory input e.g. feeling nauseous after spinning or becoming angry in loud environments. That is why we use a proprioceptive activity to calm and organise the system first.

Below are activities that provide proprioceptive input, you can think of other activities to use, the main principle is, heavy work, pulling, lifting, pushing, squeezing, and jumping.

Also helping a child label their responses, and give language to their sensory experience is really important. So we can say; 'Spinning makes me giggly, I find it hard to concentrate.' 'Squeezing makes me feel calm, and it helps me listen.'

Try to structure the day so that gross motor and movement activities are interspersed with those requiring sitting and fine motor control. For example, try to arrange it so PE sessions or playtime precedes table top tasks, where a child needs to focus. This is not always possible, so if the transition is from assembly (sitting and listening) to literacy (sitting and reading), increase the opportunity for heavy work by asking the kids to assist with classroom tasks that provide sensory input, such as give out books/ keep heavy door open for classmates/ clearing away tables.

**Movement Proprioception** – Proprioceptive information relates to feedback about the position and movement of the body. This information is received from certain receptors situated in our joints and muscles. It assists us to know where our body is in space and is important for developing adequate body and spatial awareness. Deep pressure and movement of the joints and muscles activate the proprioceptive system. Think about force lifting, pushing, and pulling.


This is the most **calming** input for the body as it tells us **where we are in space**, it keeps us **alert and attentive**, and it helps to calm the tactile system. Sitting down and not moving will naturally start the energy conservation process of shutting down, think about the hunter gatherer, we would want to save valuable nutritional energy when not hunting or gathering. When on the move we become more alert, and attentive. Proprioceptive and deep tactile reduce anxiety and hyperactivity as it 'feeds' the body with much needed information about position.

**Movement vestibular-** Our vestibular system refers to receptors that are located in our inner ears and tell us about the direction and speed we are moving in. Both the vestibular and proprioceptive systems are necessary to make the fine **postural adjustments** necessary for balance and coordinated movements.

The vestibular system can be both **calming and disorganising**. Often the rule of thumb is that linear (back and forth) rocking is calming, gentle bouncing and patting are also usually calming. Spinning, going upside down, or rapid change in direction and or speed, will have a stimulating effect on the system. For some children this can be a positive stimulation and for others it can impact on attention and engagement by over stimulating the system. Each child should be given their own vestibular profile to meet their unique processing levels.

When we see children who will rock or spin or jiggle it may be they need some help getting the right amount of vestibular input, we can use rolling games, rocking games like row your boat, and swinging games to help a child receive some regulating input. If a child reports being dizzy or sick please stop immediately, we all have our own threshold for vestibular input.

This table forms a few suggestions of activities that can be done whilst sitting and standing. You can also ask the OT team for symbols and flash cards of sensory motor activities to use with your class.

<p>Palm press</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🔍 Standing or sitting</li> <li>🔍 Place palms firmly together at chest height</li> <li>🔍 Count to 5</li> <li>🔍 Still applying pressure draw hands up over head till arms are reaching as high as they can</li> <li>🔍 Count to 5 again</li> <li>🔍 Repeat 5 times</li> </ul>
<p>Figure of 8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🔍 Clasp hands together above your head</li> </ul>



☐ Bring your arms round into a figure of 8 in front of you

☐ Repeat 5 times

### Floor drumming

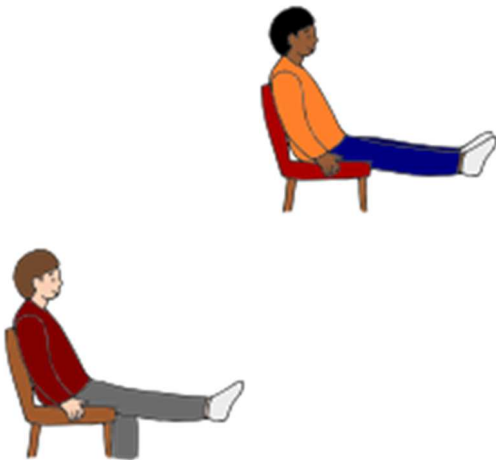


☐ Get onto all fours

☐ Pat your hands on the floor

☐ Try going as fast as you can

### Leg raisers



☐ Place your hands on the seat of your chair next to you

☐ Lift first your left leg lower it slowly and repeat 5 times

☐ Then lift your right leg, lower it slowly repeat 5 times

☐ Then lift both legs, lower them slowly and repeat 5 times

### Chair push ups

☐ Place hands beside you on your chair

☐ Push through your arms and try and lift your bottom off the chair



Repeat 5 times

### Jumping jacks



- Repeat 10 times
- Stand feet together arms at your side
- Raise your arms above your head clap your hands
- Bring your arms behind you and clap them behind your bottom/lower back

Repeat 10 times

### Clock face arms



Stand feet shoulder width apart bring arms above your head palms together

Bring right arm down to a one o'clock position

Bring arm back up clap and bring down to two o'clock position

Repeat this all around the clock face



☐ You do want to cross over your body to achieve 7,8,9,10,11 o'clock

☐ Swap sides and count the time out in reversal with the left arm, 11,10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1

### Clock face legs



☐ Stand with feet together

☐ Bring right leg out to one o'clock, draw foot back click your heel and draw foot out to 2 o'clock, repeat all around the clock,


☐ Try and reach behind and across for 7 and 8 o'clock

☐ as you get to 9 o'clock you will need to bring foot out in front of the body for 9,10,11 do draw your foot back to click your heels with every count

### Wall push ups



- press their hands on the wall and push
- See how far they can push themselves or how long they can push for
- You can place your palms to theirs and apply pressure to help them feel the push

<p>Heavy work</p> 	<p>Heavy work can really boost confidence, offering a child a chance to help and be productive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pulling a book bag or trolley</li> <li>• Carrying the shopping</li> <li>• Pushing a box</li> <li>• Making a bed</li> <li>• It's not how well the job is done, the aim is to give the muscles a work out</li> </ul>
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### Other games that are great are




- **Squeeze and catch**, this can be in a circle or across the class, using a soft ball, encourage the class throw the ball to each other by calling each other's names out. Once you have caught the ball squeeze it with a good palm press, before passing it.
- **Simon says** – try introducing sequencing challenges, so clap, jump, wiggle...
- **Rhythmic clapping**- take it in turns to clap out a rhythm, then everyone copies it, you can build up to using everyone's clap and seeing how well you can all remember the order. This is a great working memory game.
- Crawling races- encouraging, round over under and through obstacles, crawling gives the body lots of what it needs and can improve reading speeds!
- **Animal walks**: try moving around the space like a snake on your tummy using just your arms, or hopping like a frog, on feet and hands like a bear
- **Balancing games**: standing on one leg, walking a length of rope or string
- **Walking changes**: walking on tip toes, walking on heels, walking heel to toe and taking giant steps.

### Calming and regulating, supporting the body in space

Helping a child to feel grounded and anchored in space can afford them a calm and organised state of arousal. For children with tactile and proprioception difficulties or delay we can help calm the system by providing deep tactile and proprioceptive activity.

The activities summarise below are for organising and calming, they are for children who tend to be more lost in their sense of self in space and children who are prone to hyper-responsive reactions to sound or touch.

<p>Joint compressions</p> 	<p>Remember not to tickle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support each end of the joint, hand to elbow, shoulder to elbow, hand to wrist, finger joints, knee to foot</li> <li>• Make sure the joint is in a natural position and do not push outside the midline of the joint ( if it looks uncomfortable it probably is)</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply firm and gentle pressure for the count of five release and then apply pressure again, you can repeat around 5 times</li> </ul>
<p>Centring in space:</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Body wrapping- wrap a child up tight in a blanket like swaddling</li> <li>• Sausage roll- roll up in a matt or blanket on the floor</li> <li>• Build a burger – place a child on pillows and then build a burger out of them by adding pillows on top of them- keep face uncovered</li> </ul>
<p>Centring into chair</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply firm pressure through large joints</li> <li>• Shoulders hips knees</li> </ul>
<p>Squeeze mee's</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrap your arms around yourself</li> <li>• Give yourself a squeeze</li> <li>• You can also place a child in this position and give them a squeeze on top to give extra feed back</li> </ul>

Remember a few principles for calming, centring, providing deep pressure, reducing light touch, reducing erratic sound and sounds of high frequency.