

## ***Tactile Play Activities, Developing Tactile Tolerance and Tactile Discrimination- Training***

### **Tactile discrimination activities:**

It is important to know how to make activities feel safe for a child. Always provide a child with deep pressure and proprioceptive activity prior to tactile play. We do this in order to calm the nervous system. It is important to introduce tactile stimuli in the following way and NEVER force an activity.

Avoid rewarding a child for touching something. Always demonstrate the activity so he can first copy you. Always demonstrate enjoyment when performing the activity. Show the child you cleaning your hand with a warm damp flannel and then a dry towel, and make sure they have access to their own flannel and towel so they can see clearly how they can remove any substance with ease.

**Proprioceptive activities** involve pushing, pulling, force and weight bearing. Movements like climbing, jumping, bouncing and clapping work on proprioception.

**Step one:** calming the body. Provide around 10 min prior to starting a messy activity, such as eating and drinking.

- Joint compressions
- Heavy work, pushing pulling jumping, squishing, playing drums
- Weighted equipment, bear hug, vibrating pillow
- Vibrating chew toy, static chew toy, bubble blowing, drinking through a straw or smaller teat on his bottle to increase suction

**Step two:** setting up for messy play.

- Have a dry towel/kitchen towels in sight and reach.
- Have wet wipes and or a warm bowl of water with a flannel within sight and available for cleaning hands, demonstrate using them regularly.
- Have a clear activity schedule with visual time table and timer.
- Name and label experiences which will help a child to make choices.

**Step three:** the order of tactile stimuli. Always introduce firm stimuli first. Build up using firm then medium. Once you're confident in the activities, start to introduce soft and wet. Start with primarily

wet items. They are things that do not provide a secondary texture like sticky fingers. Try mixing wet and dry like sand in playdough and then sand in paint, fruit/pasta pieces in yogurt.

**Dry stimuli**- uncooked pasta, sand, dry rice, dry lentils and beans, ball pond, stress toys, bubble wrap (for popping), screwing up tin foil or paper, tearing paper, scrunching paper, coins, cornflakes, oats, crisps, popcorn, pretzels, wax, dry leaves, wood, twigs

**Medium stimuli**- flour, icing sugar, coco powder, soil (dry), playdough, moon-sand, bread crumbs, jelly sweets (haribo, jelly babies, jelly beans)

**Soft stimuli** – soft toys, cotton wool, fabric, shredded tissue paper, feathers, pom-poms, felt, leaves

**Wet stimuli primary**- water warm and cold fizzy water, ice, jell beads, cooked and well drained rice, cooked and well drained pasta, wet sand, plasticine

**Wet stimuli secondary**- water and corn flour mix, wet soil, paint, glue, yogurt, jelly, ice cream (cold), porridge, jam, honey, mouse, shaving foam, soap, bubbles, custard, clay

***Temperature changes*** are really valuable when trying to improve tactile discrimination. Play with ice and warm water. Also try freezing other textures like sand in water, frozen fruit slices, and frozen chocolate. Warm play is also great. Try mixing corn flour with warm water.

### **Games and activities to encourage tactile discrimination**

There are a variety of activities and variations of games you can play. Firstly, try just introducing different textures. Using food stuffs is good with children as often they want to place things in their mouths. (Please always be allergy aware.) When a child is just starting out on their journey of oral or tactile exploration the last thing we want to do is stop them or take stuff away if they puts it to their mouth.

- **Pouring games** –Pouring items between containers, use bright colours like food dye and glitter to make it visually rewarding
- **Scrunching and popping**- Bubble wrap, scrunching paper and tearing paper for paper machete and collage
- **Finding things**- Make a discovery box. Fill a large container with sand, rice or lentils and hide toys and other objects inside it. Bright things like CD's and light up toys are great. Noise making toys can encourage a child to go hunting.
- **Drumming**- Find a flexible surface such as Clingfilm stretched over a box. Cover it in a powder and drum, making the powder puff up. You can build up to wet textures, wet corn flour has amazing results.
- **Splat**- This can be done on a large or a small scale. Make a puddle (on the floor or in a box) of something wet (paint, custard coloured water) and then drop items into this to make a splash and splat sound and movement. Provide a child with a waterproof apron and goggles if he will tolerate them. At first he may just want to watch others play the game. If playing outside, you can put wellies and waterproofs on and slash bright colours onto a large picture.