

Whilst your young person is away from school, they may benefit from sensory input to meet their needs. We have put together these Occupational Therapy ideas that could support their sensory needs.

SENSORY STRATEGIES/ACTIVITIES

1. Deep Tactile (Massage) Activities:

Deep tactile activities involve firm, consistent, rhythmic touch to the body. This input produces a calming effect to the nervous system. At a neurological level, deep tactile input inhibits other sensory pathways which may be overwhelming/ over stimulating to a person (such as auditory and light touch pathways).

- **Massage hands and forearms firmly.** Squeezes to his upper limbs. Rub and gently tug at fingers as you massage this.
- **Sandwich/Pancake game:** Lying on the floor, squash with the peanut ball. Rolling this over trunk, legs and arms. Pretend to add different toppings to a 'sandwich/pancake'.



- Lying on the floor and **roll child into a blanket or towel**, ensure to keep head out. You can then 'squash' them with the peanut ball by rolling this over them if they like more pressure.
- Provide child with a **Snuggle/Quiet Area:** bean bags, weighted blankets, or large pillows/stuff animals that the child can burrow into. A large box for the child to get into works well or create a dark tent area in a corner with a black out fabric, make a den under a table. Dimmed lights and calming smells (e.g: Lavender)

2. 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 nervous system through helping the brain understand the position of the body in space.

- **Climbing, crawling** or any other gross motor movement - encourage Child to climb up/over the climbing frame. Do a circuit where they must collect bean bags/balls/soft toys/ animals etc.



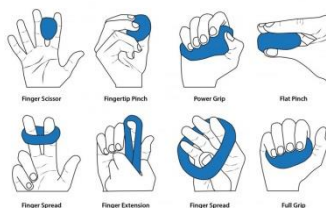
- Crawl through tunnels or over pillows or cushions.
- **Pushing or carrying heavy objects** - carry shopping bags, books, wheelbarrow



- **Pushing/pulling boxes or carts** filled with materials (textbooks, etc.) - play a game where they have to collect items in a box and push/pull this box from one point to another.
- **Jobs around the house:** sweeping, pushing the Hoover, cleaning windows, digging in the garden.
- **Carrying a heavy backpack** can provide proprioception during his day. No more than 10% of body weight.
- **Squeezing** water bottles, therapy putty, paint bottles, stress balls, playdoh etc.
- **Bowling** - throwing a ball at target/skittles.
- **Safe crashing** - place several pillows and blankets, sofa cushions on the floor so they have a safe place to land.
- **Play catch with large gym ball.**



- **Therapy putty (high resistance):** hide objects in the therapy putty and encourage Child to find them. Roll the putty out and squash it flat. Therapy putty is available from Amazon/retailers online.



- **Weight bearing activities**, which involve putting pressure through his hands i.e. working over a chair, gym ball or wedge while on stomach. Play games in prone (lying on their tummy).



- **Animal Walks:** Frog Jump, Bear Walk, Inchworm, Elephant Walk (Stomping), Kangaroo Jump (Jumping), Crab Walk, Donkey Kicks.



3. Vestibular (Movement) Stimulating Activities

Linear movement (forwards backwards) is usually more organising to the sensory system than, rotating or spinning.

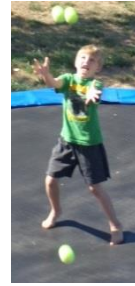
- **Rocking over a large therapy ball** on their back or tummy - they can go and collect bean bags (walking on their hands to reach bean bag). Walk back and throw these at a target.



- **Sit and bounce** on the therapy ball/peanut ball.
- **Play game sitting on ball** - reaching and throwing beanbags or balls at target
- **Balance games** - masking tape on the floor to tip toe along or walk across heel toe.
- **Row Row your boat.**



- **Trampette:** Have a mini indoor trampoline on which the child can bounce. Play bouncing games for at least 8-10 minutes. (e.g jump and catch a ball or jump stop clap, jump stop clap clap etc)



- Trampoline outside: Encourage child to **run in place on trampoline, run in a circle, lift knees up and tap these, try star jumps, bounce on bottom, bounce on knees.**
- **'Pencil' rolling on the floor** - play a game where child must collect a bean bag or toy and bring this back, rolling along the floor keeping his body as straight as possible, arms straight above head. This can also be included as part of a circuit.
- **Remember to roll in both directions.**



- Play **spinning games:** Spinning around one way and then the other.
Note: Following any spinning/rolling activities Child should carry out some 'heavy work/proprioceptive' activities as spinning tends to be disorganising but is helpful in 'training the vestibular system' to cope with movement input. Proprioception will help to organise his sensory system.
- Go to the park and play on playground equipment such as swings, slides, and roundabouts.
- Tuck legs up into body, squeeze and rock from side to side.
- Aerobic exercise: go karts, trikes, bikes, scooter, ride on toys, running, chase, basketball, ball games, football.



4. Enhanced Tactile Activities

- Have a box of fidget/squishy toys which Child can fiddle with to calm down.
- Engage in tactile play/craft activities such as:
 - Paper mache
 - Playdough/Clay moulding
 - Painting - using different utensils or hand painting
 - Making gloop or slime
 - Sand play
 - Play with aqua beads
 - Kinetic sand
 - Shaving foam
 - Spray soap
 - Dry rice and lentils.
- Baking and cooking activities could also be used to provide different tactile input.
- Fine motor play activities to sit and re focus/calm: threading beads, loom bands, tracing activities, pencil mazes, constructions games - lego, duplo, etc

CYPIT Occupational Therapy Team