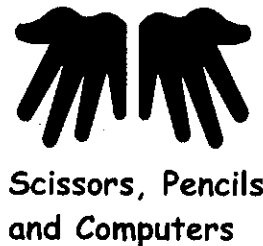
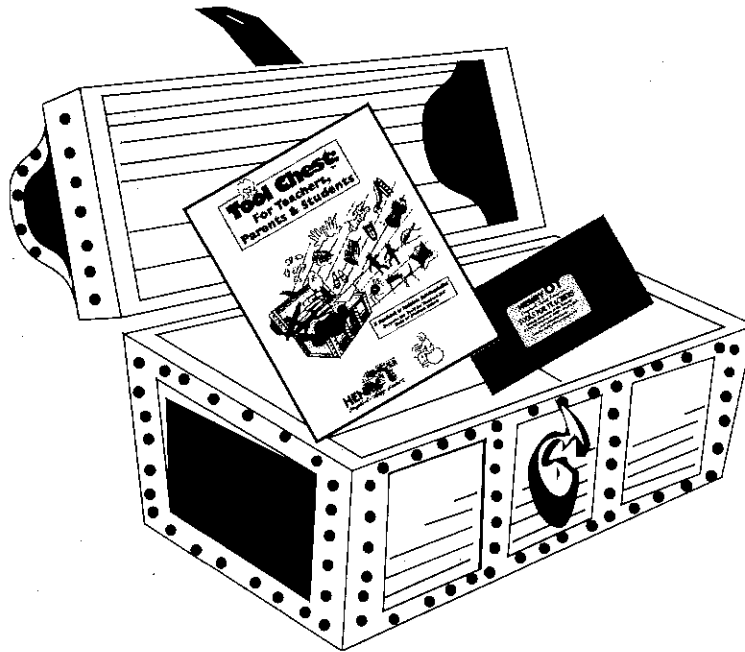
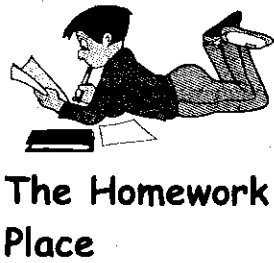


# Tools for Parents<sup>TM</sup>

A Handbook to Bring Sensory Integration into the Home



Developed by:  
Diana A. Henry, MS, OTR/L  
Tammy Wheeler, MS, OTR/L

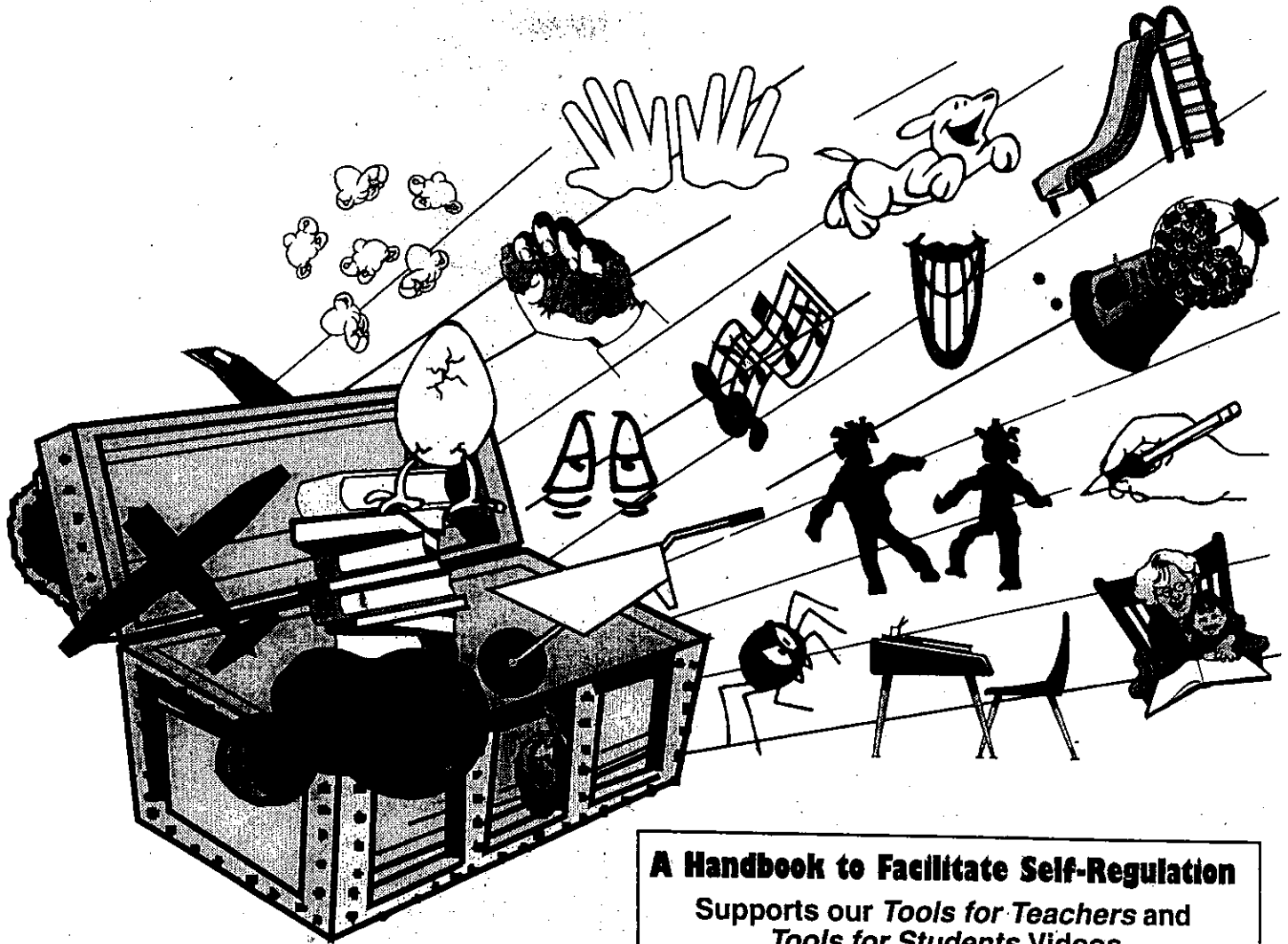
**HenryOT**  
Occupational Therapy Services, Inc.



Designed by Rick Ruess  
on ATEACHABOUT



# **Tool Chest**<sup>TM</sup> **For Teachers, Parents & Students**



**A Handbook to Facilitate Self-Regulation**  
Supports our *Tools for Teachers* and  
*Tools for Students* Videos

**HENRY**  
Occupational Therapy Services<sup>TM</sup>



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## Frequently Asked Questions:

### *How can Tool Chest be used in a classroom with 25 children?*

Ask your occupational therapist to help you create different spaces and make the tools available. Through collaborative efforts, you and your children can develop personalized Tool Chests (Activity #27). Provide individual *sensory diets* (coined by Patricia Wilbarger, M.Ed., OTR) throughout the school day.

At the beginning of each activity, share with your children, the contents in the BENEFITS box. These statements are written for them.

### *How do you know which tools to use, and for how long?*

You learn to become detectives, especially as you learn more about brain circuitry, sensation, and your children's optimal range of arousal for performance, learning and attention.

### *When to use?*

### *What time of the day?*

### *What to expect?*

### *How long will it take?*

As *Tool Chest* presents "non prescriptive" activities for teachers and parents to use, there are no rules except **SAFETY! SAFETY! And SAFETY...!**

The child is your guide. Optimally, these activities can be used throughout the day to assist the children in maintaining the various appropriate **levels of attention needed throughout the day.**

**Collaboration** is the key. Together, the child, teacher and parents will develop a personalized *Tool Chest*. Activities can be used individually and/or in a group to meet each child's sensory needs. This will help the child be successful in all environments throughout the day, both at school and at home.

Always be alert to the child's response. **Never** push the child into an activity he/she does not want to do. **OBSERVE! OBSERVE! OBSERVE!** If there are any indications that the activity does not fit the child's need **at that time**, discontinue immediately. Ask for professional expertise before continuing.

Occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech therapists, music therapists and other health professionals, who have received training in the area of sensory processing, sensory modulation and sensory integration, should be consulted and included in the collaborative team.



## **What is *Tool Chest: For Teachers, Parents & Students?***

*Tool Chest: For Teachers, Parents & Students* is filled with activities that are designed to be used at school and at home with students from ages 4 to 13. The activities can be adapted to meet your children's individual needs. Our handbook is user friendly and helps to solve problems by using "over-the-counter" occupational therapy activities. As even the most difficult child responds to these techniques, teaching becomes easier and more enjoyable. Children are happier, more confident, and more accepting of others' differences. *Tool Chest* also supports our *TOOLS FOR TEACHERS* and *TOOLS FOR STUDENTS* videos.

## **Why You Need *Tool Chest: For Teachers, Parents & Students:***

Some children are easily overstimulated or distracted by sounds, others by touch or visual stimulation. Some need motion – of their hands, legs, or mouth for example – to focus their attention. All need an appropriate environment, including proper seating. *Tool Chest: For Teachers, Parents & Students* provides 26 fun, practical activities to assist children in developing their optimal range for paying attention, performing fine motor skills, improving self-esteem, and more. Our self-guided handbook is easy for teachers and parents to use in the classroom and at home.

## **When to use *Tool Chest: For Teachers, Parents & Students:***

**Now!** Teachers, parents and students can use *Tool Chest* to support the Individuals with Disability Act of 1997 (P.L.105.17)

*Tool Chest* can be used to assist in identifying the possible function of behavior, especially when behavior communicates the need for self-regulation.

*Tool Chest* can be used in the Behavioral Support, Strategies and Positive Intervention Checklist to address accommodations, environmental changes, proactive strategies and positive behavioral interventions.

Various teams can collaborate to use *Tool Chest* including the IEP team, the 504 Accommodation Team and the Teacher Assistance / Child Study Team. The goal is to assist in building supportive environments and teaching alternative skills. A Personalized Tool Chest (Activity #27) can be placed in the student's cumulative file to be shared with teachers, from one year to the next.

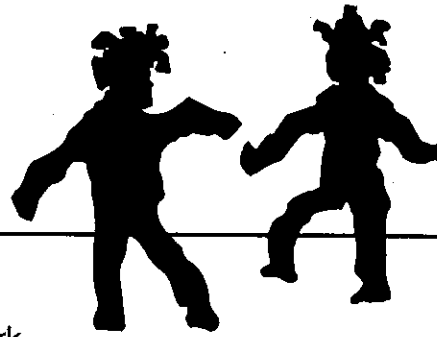
## **Who is Henry of Henry OT Services Inc.?**

Diana Henry, founder and president of Henry Occupational Therapy Services, Inc., has developed occupational therapy (OT) programs for school districts in Arizona, since 1984. She assists schools in moving from a medical model to school-based OT services. Ms. Henry earned the 1997 Outstanding Occupational Therapist award from the Arizona Occupational Therapy Association.

Ms. Henry received her B.S. in occupational therapy from Tufts University in Boston, and her M.S. in sensory integration from Rush University in Chicago. She has taught at Arizona State University and in the Netherlands, emphasizing the early identification of students at risk for coordination disorders and sensory integration problems.



# Shakes and Wiggles



Movement Tools  
**#1**  
Shakes & Wiggles

## **BENEFITS**

This will help you tune in, be ready to work and get those wiggles out.

## **TO BEGIN**

- Arrange children with at least an arm's length between them.
- While standing, give verbal instructions to children.
- Then have children begin movement following your example.
- Continue with each body part (see movement instructions below).

*Remember the object of this movement is to remove the shakes and wiggles. This activity can be used prior to beginning a sit-down task and/or as a movement break to regain attention.*

## **SHAKES AND WIGGLES INSTRUCTIONS**

1. While standing, reach your arms up high and catch an invisible ball.
2. Put the wiggles on one arm and then on the other arm. Your arms will begin shaking. Only your arms, everything else is still and quiet.
3. Now take the wiggles off your arms and put them first on one leg, then on the other leg (shift weight). Only your legs shake. Keep everything else still and quiet.
4. Now take the wiggles off your legs and put them on your face. Your face muscles will shake. Only your face. Everything else is still and quiet.
5. Take the wiggles off your face and throw the invisible ball back up into the air.
6. Slowly lower your arms to your sides and sit back in your chair quietly.

*The shakes and wiggles are gone from your entire body. We are now ready to learn!*

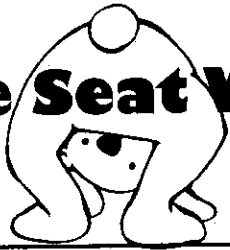
## **Additional Project**

Have children draw a picture of themselves getting rid of the shakes and wiggles.

### **Supplies needed:**

*Children will need paper, crayons or markers for creating their drawings.*

# The Seat Walk



## **BENEFITS**

The Seat Walk gets all the parts of your body working together. It develops coordinated reciprocal movements.

## **TO BEGIN**

- You will need enough room to move freely back and forth across the floor.
- Have the children begin The Seat Walk following your example.
- You could pretend you are doing this walk for a special reason (like there is something up high, so you have to stay low).

## **THE SEAT WALK INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Sit on the floor with your legs straight in front of you.
2. From the shoulder your arms are straight out in front.
3. Lift up one side of your bottom by tilting to the side a little and pushing forward a little.
4. Then shift and do the same thing on the other side.
5. You will move forward a little at a time this way.
6. As you get better you'll be able to go a little faster.



NOTE: At first, going backwards may be easier!

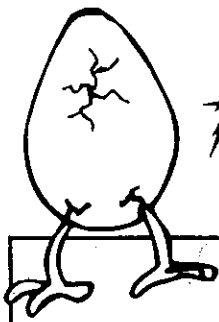
## **Additional Project**

Have children draw a picture of their seat walk or their favorite "fun" way of walking.

### **Supplies needed:**

*Children will need paper, crayons or markers for creating their drawings.*





# THE FRAGILE EGG

## **BENEFITS**

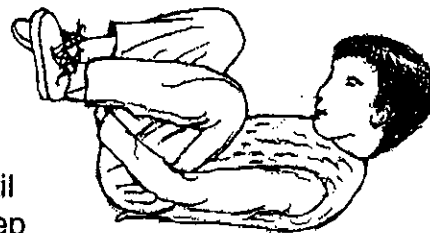
This is a fun way to work on the muscles that help you curl up. The rocking movement calms you down.

## **TO BEGIN**

- You will need enough room to allow children to rock back and forth.
- To start the game, check that each of the children have enough space behind them to be safe.
- If the floor is hard, a small pillow or towel should be placed behind the child's lower back.

## **EGG GAME INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Begin in a sitting position with knees bent and feet flat on floor.
2. Place arms and hands under the knees.
3. Keep the chin tucked into the chest and slowly rock back onto the back.
4. Keep the chin tucked in as the feet come off the floor in a rocking motion.
5. Continue rocking by bringing the body up, still "curled up" until the feet are flat on the floor. Keep going back and forth.




## **Additional Project**

Trace the egg shape on paper without the verbal instructions. Have the children add the face, arms and legs to the egg shape. You could also have them use colors to show how doing this game made them feel.

### **Supplies needed:**

Paper for egg shape, crayons and markers





# The Popcorn Maker

Movement Tools  
**#4**  
Popcorn Maker

## **BENEFITS**

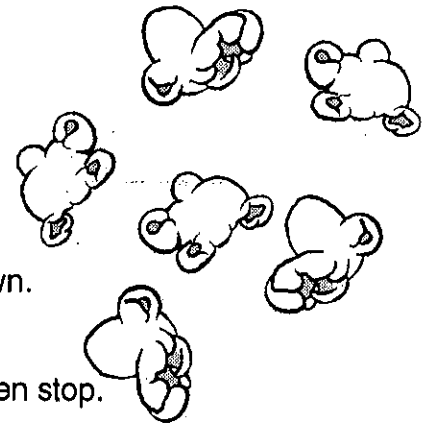
This is a quick way to get going and then calm down.

## **TO BEGIN**

- Give verbal instructions to children.
- Then have the children begin the movements following your example.

## **POPCORN MAKER INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Sit in a chair with your feet flat on the floor.
2. Put your hands on the chair at your sides.
3. Now begin to slowly bounce up and down like a piece of popcorn beginning to warm up.
4. Use your hands and feet to help push you up and down.
5. Go faster and faster as the popcorn begins to pop.
6. When it is almost all popped, start to slow down and then stop.
7. "The popcorn is now ready."



## **Additional Project**

You can put popcorn in a popcorn maker to be popped. Start it when you begin the activity with the children. When it is finished popping, the children can do Hand Games (Activity #14) with it and then eat it.

### **Supplies needed:**

*Popcorn maker and popcorn.*



# THE AIRPLANE

## **BENEFITS**

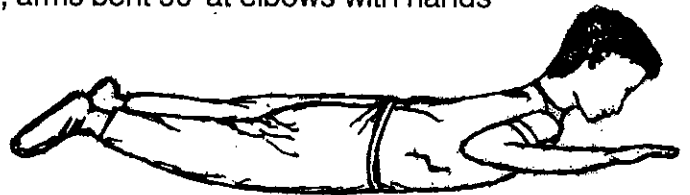
You get to fly like a quiet airplane today! The Airplane helps tone your neck and back muscles for sitting at your desk.

## **TO BEGIN**

- The children will need enough room to stretch freely while lying on the floor.
- Give verbal instructions to children while they are standing.
- Then have the children begin movement following your example.

## **THE AIRPLANE INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Lie on your stomach on the floor. Legs straight and together.
2. Arms are stretched out at shoulders, arms bent 90° at elbows with hands and fingers open pointing forward.
3. Bring your head, arms and chest up at the same time with your legs by lifting them at the hips and knees. The thighs are off the floor.
4. Keep the legs straight. Do not bend them at the knees.
5. Do not arch the neck, simply look straight ahead.
6. Breathe.
7. When tired of holding this position, "land" softly, rest and try again.



## **Additional Project**

Have children draw a picture of how their house or school would look if they were an airplane flying overhead.

### **Supplies needed:**

*Children will need paper, crayons or markers for creating their drawings.*

# Wheelbarrow Walk



## **BENEFITS**

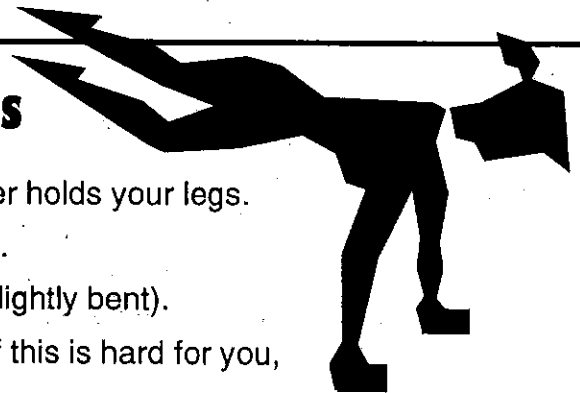
The Wheelbarrow Walk will help give you the shoulder stability needed for writing and cutting.

## **TO BEGIN**

- Provide enough room for children to move across the room in a wheelbarrow position.
- Children will need a strong partner.
- With everyone standing, explain what is required in the Wheelbarrow Walk.
- Then have children begin movement following your example.
- Start with just a few steps, practicing to go further each time.

## **WHEELBARROW WALK INSTRUCTIONS**

1. You are the wheelbarrow and a strong helper holds your legs.
2. Begin on the floor on your hands and knees.
3. Keep your arms straight (with elbows only slightly bent).
4. The helper holds your ankles up in the air. If this is hard for you, your helper can hold you at the knees.
5. "Walk" on your hands without collapsing onto your forearms.
6. Start with a few steps and continue practicing to travel longer distances.



## **Additional Project**

Each child can record his progress by counting the additional number of steps performed each time.

Draw a picture using a wheelbarrow as the main subject or draw a "wheelbarrow person."

### **Supplies needed:**

*Children will need paper, crayons or markers for creating their drawings.*

# BELLY ON THE BALL

Muscle Tools

**#7**

Belly on  
the Ball

## **BENEFITS**

Belly on the Ball combines the benefits of the Airplane (Activity #5) and the Wheelbarrow-Walk (Activity #6) into one. It also helps strengthen the muscles of your neck, back and shoulders.

## **TO BEGIN**

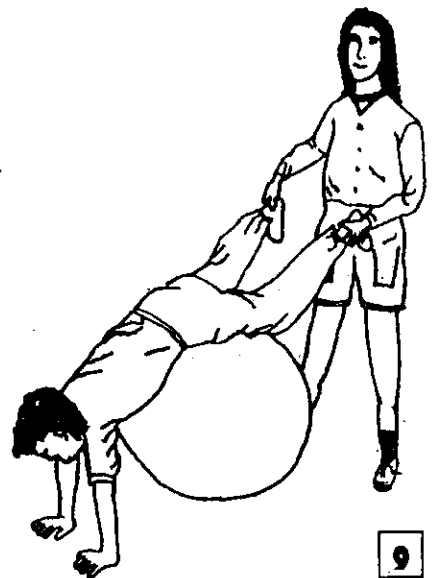
- Be sure the children have a large enough area to be able to rock back and forth on a ball.
- The ball size should be about 13"-19" for preschool, 17"-22" for K-1st and 21"-26" for 2nd grade and up.

## **BELLY ON THE BALL INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Lie with your chest and stomach over the ball. Another person should help you get on the ball.
2. Your arms should be out in front, ready to catch you.
3. Your helper will stand or kneel behind you, and hold your ankles, knees, or hips.
4. Your helper will help you rock forward so you "catch" yourself on your open palms.
5. Push off the floor with your palms.
6. Keep going back and forth, without collapsing onto your forearms.

### **Supplies Needed:**

If a ball chair with feet is used, simply lie on the ball so the feet are out to the side.





### **BENEFITS**

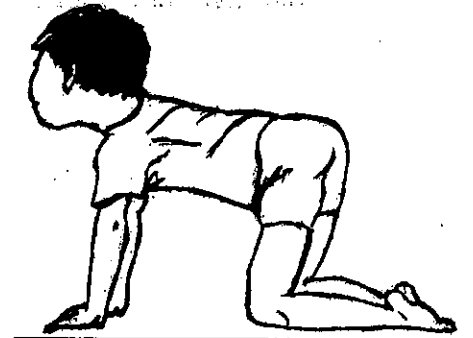
The Rocking Puppy is important for all muscles including the head, neck, shoulders, hands, fingers and hips. It can help "quiet" your body because it is rhythmical and repetitive.

### **TO BEGIN**

- Provide enough room for the children to rock back and forth on their hands and knees.
- Explain how everyone will become a puppy - a quiet puppy. Give instructions for the Rocking Puppy.

### **ROCKING PUPPY INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Get down on your hands and knees.
2. Arms and hands are under your shoulders.
3. Knees are under your hips, toes flat against the floor (e.g. shoelaces on floor).
4. Hands are flat, palms on the floor, fingers are forward.
5. Elbows are slightly bent. Do not let the arms "lock" at the elbows.
6. Now rock slowly, forward and back.

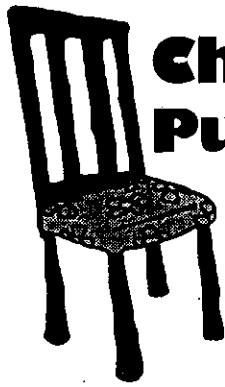


### **Additional Project**

Draw a picture of a puppy dog or of your favorite animal.

#### **Supplies needed:**

*Children will need paper, crayons or markers for creating their drawings.*



# Chair Push-Ups

Muscle Tools

#9

Chair Push-Ups

## **BENEFITS**

You've done push-ups in physical education class, but these Chair Push-Ups are different. They prepare your arms for writing by working the shoulders and hands.

## **TO BEGIN**

- This exercise requires each child to have his own chair. Be sure the chair is the right size so the feet can be flat on the floor.
- Allow enough room between children and chairs to participate in this movement effectively.
- Then have the children begin movement following your example.
- Help those who are having difficulty by supporting them under the legs at the thighs as they push with their palms against the chair seat.

## **CHAIR PUSH-UPS INSTRUCTIONS**

*sides for pushing up.*

1. Sit in a chair with your feet flat on the floor.
2. Put your hands to your sides with palms flat and fingers curled around the edge of the chair.
3. Push up so that your bottom comes off the chair seat and feet come up off the floor.
4. Use your arms and hands to help push you up and lower you down.
5. Whatever your age, do that many Chair Push-Ups.

### ***Supplies needed:***

*You will need a chair that properly fits each child. Feet need to be flat on the floor and the chair seat needs to be wide enough for the child to put his hands on the sides for pushing up.*



## **BENEFITS**

When you do big Heavy Jobs like carrying large books, you get to use many of your muscles. This helps your brain work better so you can focus on your projects. This is also a good "movement break."

## **TO BEGIN**

- Have a discussion regarding Heavy Jobs, and prepare a list of possible Heavy Jobs.
- After a Heavy Job is chosen, prepare to help complete the task at hand.
- This exercise can be done at any time during the school day to help focus for other big projects.
- Your Heavy Jobs list could become part of your everyday routine. Allowing a temporary break from academics has many additional benefits.

As a group or individually, have children decide on some Heavy Jobs. Is there a big Heavy Job you wish the teacher would let you do? What is it?

### **SAMPLE Heavy Job List**

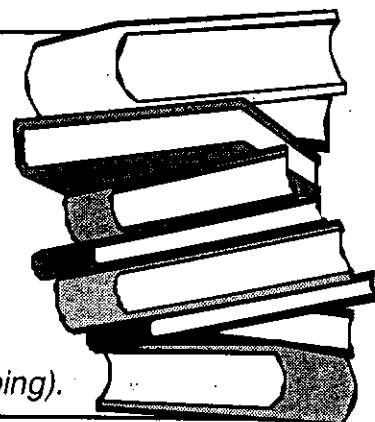
*Carry something like a stack of books or a large box to another room.*

*Clean the chalk or white board, using large sweeping movements with both hands with one big long eraser.*

*Move tables or furniture for special projects or activities, using both hands.*

*Stack chairs, without making a sound.*

*Help the custodian with cleaning projects (e.g. sweeping).*



## **Additional Project**

Have children draw a picture of a Heavy Job that could be done in the classroom, around their school, or at home.

### **Supplies needed:**

*Children will need paper, crayons or markers for creating their drawings.*

# Traditional

## **BENEFITS**

Let's learn and practice the best way to sit in our chairs when we write.

## **TO BEGIN**

- Each child needs his own chair at a desk or table. He also needs a sheet of paper for writing and a pencil, marker or pen.

**Now as a group let's practice sitting in our chairs and at our desks/tables:**

1. **Be sure the chair is the right size for you.**

*Sit in a chair. Your feet should be flat on the floor.*

*Your back is up against the back of the chair.*

*Your knees are bent.*

*Make sure the hips, knees, and ankles are at a 90 degree angle.*

**Now that you know your chair is the right size, practice this position in your chair.**

2. **Next, let's check that your desk or table is the right size.**

*While sitting in your chair, bend your arms at the elbows.*

*Your desk or table should be about 1 inch higher than where your elbows bend.*

**Now that you know your desk or table is the right size, practice this position in your chair at your desk or table.**

3. **Now let's practice positioning your writing paper on the desk or table (optional).**

*If you are left-handed, you may want to tilt your paper so that the upper left corner is higher. If right-handed, you may want to tilt your paper so that the upper right corner is higher. Use your free hand to hold the paper steady.*

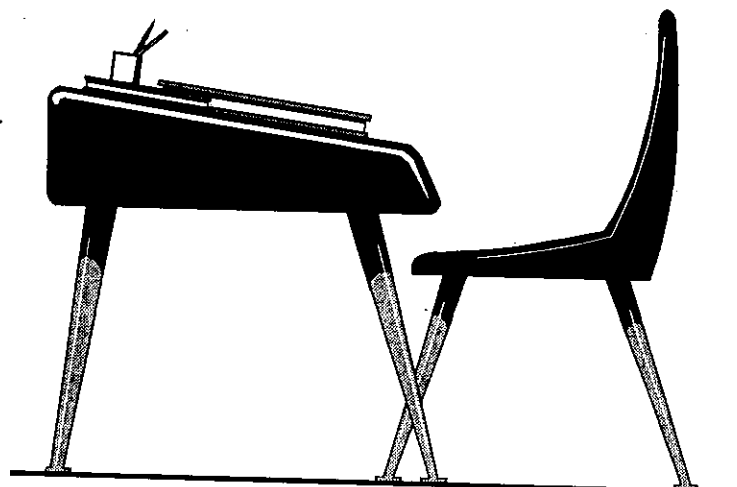
**Now you are ready to write.**

## **Additional Project**

Draw a picture of yourself sitting at your desk or table.

### **Supplies needed:**

*Children will need paper, crayons or markers for creating their drawings.*







# The Ball Chair

Positions  
**#13**  
The Ball Chair

## **BENEFITS**

It can help take the wiggles out and help you sit up straight. It can also help strengthen the back.

## **TO BEGIN**

- It is best to have balls with feet. They are easier to carry and they stay in place when the student stands up. Sizes vary depending on the size of the children. Generally 13"-19" for preschool, 17"-22" for K-1st and 21"-26" for 2nd grade and up. Shorter children will need smaller balls.
- Show children The Ball Chair and demonstrate how to sit on it properly.
- Give each child a blank sheet with lines and a pencil or marker.
- Have children list on their papers some safety rules for using The Ball Chair in their classroom.
- Once you are satisfied that everyone is clear on The Ball Chair rules, it's time to try it out.

### **SAMPLE Ball Chair Safety Rules**

#### OK

*Bounce a little*  
*Sit for 2 to 3 minutes*  
*Pass it quietly to your neighbor*  
*Put it up and out of the way*  
*when not in use*

#### NOT OK

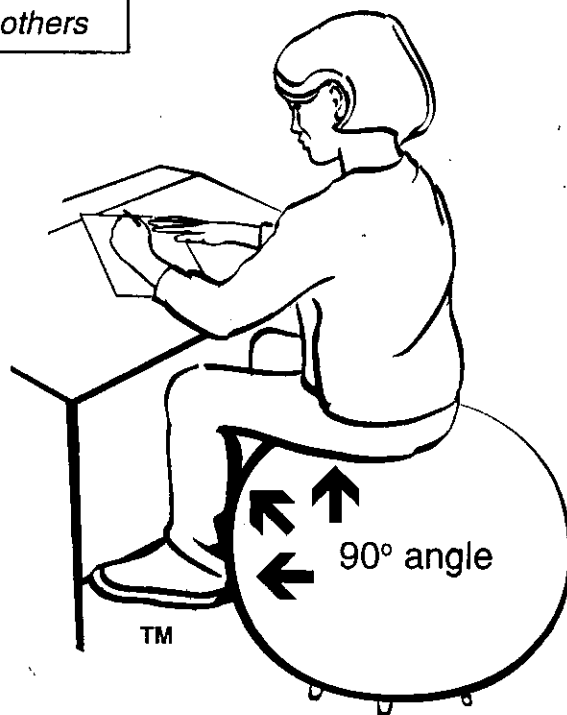
*Bounce a lot*  
*Kick the ball*  
*Poke the ball*  
*Throw the ball*  
*Disturb others*

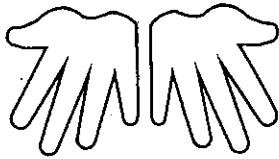
## **THE BALL CHAIR INSTRUCTIONS**

- Look at the ball chair illustration → Notice that it is important to keep a 90° angle at the hips, at the knees and at the ankles.
- The feet are flat on the floor or supported.
- The desk/tabletop is no higher or lower than about 1" above the bent elbows.

### **Supplies needed:**

*Balls with feet, "T" stools or other tools can also be used, as long as the 90° angles are maintained.*





# Hand Games

Writing/Cutting Tools

**#14**

Hand Games

## **BENEFITS**

Hand games develop your hand muscles for using scissors, markers, and other writing tools. You are developing in-hand manipulation skills.

## **TO BEGIN**

1. Gather the supplies needed (see below).
2. Prepare your game area. Using table(s) set up games.
3. Have children stand, kneel, sit comfortably in their chairs or on their ball chairs, at the hand game area.
4. Try these fun, one-handed games. They will make holding, cutting and writing easier.

## **HAND GAME LIST**

### ***PINCER GRASP* to develop precision muscle function**

- Use an eye dropper to drop water one drop at a time on a plant or colored water into a jar.
- Pick up cotton balls or small things with tweezers.

### ***SHIFT* to be able to move the paper when cutting and to adjust a pencil when beginning to write**

- Take the cap off a pen with just one hand.
- Pick up a pencil with just one hand. Now walk up the pencil with your fingers to the eraser, turn the pencil around and with your fingers, walk up the pencil towards the point.
- Pretend you have chalk or sand on your fingers. Get it off by brushing the thumb across the fingers of just that hand. No shaking!

### ***FINGER TO PALM* to be able to manipulate and hold more than one object in one hand**

- Take coins from a purse, and move them with your fingers to your palm one at a time, using just that hand.

### ***PALM TO FINGER* to be able to move objects in one's hand without dropping**

- Hold 4 or 5 pieces of popcorn in your hand. Feed yourself the popcorn bringing **one piece at a time from your palm to your fingers**, using just that hand.

### ***Supplies needed:***

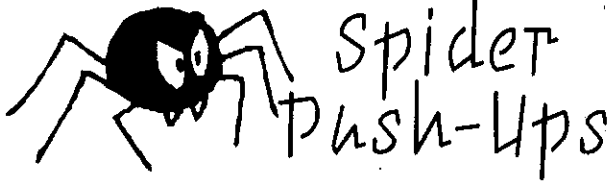
*This movement requires multiple supplies. To participate in all the games listed above you will need: eyedroppers, tweezers, pen with cap, chalk/sand, popped popcorn, pencil, coins, purse/container, food coloring, small jars/cups, small plant and cottonballs/small candy.*

## OT's Top Ten List for Pre-Handwriting Exercises\*

1. **Mickey Mouse Ears** - Place fists next to ears, squeeze, fingers open and close, 10-15 times.
2. **Desk Push Ups** - Hands flat on desks, thumbs and pointer tips facing each other (creating a triangle), bend elbows, nose into triangle created between hands, then up 10-15 times.
3. **Windshield Wipers** - Arms above head, cross straight arms 10 times then put bottom arm over top hand and do 10 more.
4. **Scissor Cuts** - Same as above only arms are pointed straight down with palms up.
5. **Shoulder Shrugs** - Called the "I Don't Knows" palms up shoulder shrugs towards ears, release, 10-15 times.
6. **Throw Aways** - Elbows bent, fisted hands in front of shoulders, extend arms in a throwing motion, 10-15 times.
7. **Door Knob Turns** - Arms in front of you, elbows slightly bent, four fingers right next to each other, thumbs open, turn both hands toward thumbs at wrist, turn and return to mid position (not towards little finger), 10 -15 times.
8. **Good Morning America** - Hands hold opposite elbows, lift in a single motion over the head, return to waist and repeat, 10-15 times.
9. **Finger Opposition** - Hold fingers next to ears, have child touch thumb to each finger (i.e. pointer, middle, ring, pinkie) and back again, 10-15 times.
10. **Butterflies** - Hold arms straight in front of body, make an X with thumbs, palms facing out, make small circles 10 times to the right, then 10 times to the left.

**Other Ideas:** Donkey Kicks, Wheelbarrow Walks, Army Crawls, Itsy Bitsy Spider, Finger Shadows, Where Is Thumbkins, Finger Flicks.

*\*Contributed by Tere Bowen-Irish, OTR/L*



## **BENEFITS**

You know your body needs to warm up before doing physical activities, like basketball. Writing and cutting are also physical activities. So you need to warm up for them as well.

## **TO BEGIN**

- Have children sit in chairs at their desks or at a table.
- Demonstrate hand placement and movements for spider push-ups.
- This is a good warm up before starting a writing or cutting activity.

## **SPIDER PUSH-UPS INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Place the back of one hand against the table top.
2. Place the other hand (the spider) on top, matching the fingers (*pinky to pinky, ring to ring, etc.*).
3. Extend the fingers from the bottom hand (*mirror*) up in the air finger tips together (*like a tee-pee*).
4. Then bring the fingers back down against the table.
5. Do this 5 times.
6. Then turn the hands over so now the spider is upside down. Repeat 5 times.

## **Additional Projects**

Chair Push-Ups (Activity #9) are good warm ups and can be used before writing too. Why might a spider do push-ups? Make up a story with pictures and/or words.

### **Supplies needed:**

*Children will need paper, crayons or markers for creating their stories.*



# Pencil Holding

## **BENEFITS**

The best way to hold a pencil is by using a tripod grasp. Your hand gets less tired and your movements are more precise.

## **TO BEGIN**

- Children need to be in their best writing/learning positions. (See Activity #11)
- Helping children achieve the best way to hold their writing tools takes practice. Try finding time each day to review, especially in Kindergarten and 1st grade.
- Every child should have writing paper and a pencil or pen. Short pencils can be used too, as they promote the tripod grasp.

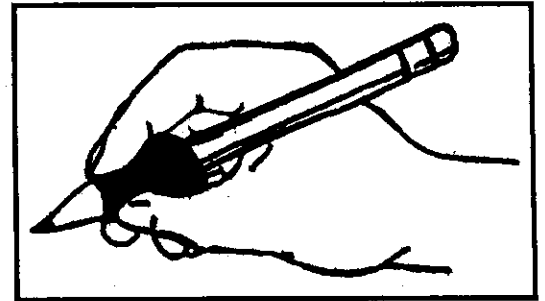
## **PENCIL HOLDING INSTRUCTIONS**

There are many pencil grips available. See which one works for you. You can use a grip to remind you how to keep your fingers in the best position. The "bulb" grip in the picture has the fatter part higher up the pencil than the skinny part. This helps to remind your fingers to keep an open web space between the thumb and pointing finger.

Grasp your pencil between the tips of your thumb and your pointing finger and support it against the side of your middle finger. You are using a tripod grasp.

**OR**

Make the "OK" sign with your writing hand. Drop the middle, ring, and pinky to be in line with the index finger. Open the index finger and thumb. Insert your pencil.



## **ADDITIONAL PENCIL HOLDINGS**

Sometimes when you pick up a pencil you have to twist and turn it all around to get it pointing the right way for writing. Try doing this a few times:

Put a pencil on a table or desk. Now pick it up with your writing hand only. Turn it around in your fingers until you are holding it the right way.

Would you like to know an easy way to pick up a pencil? Put the pencil again on a table/desk. Before you pick it up, turn it so the point is facing your pinky. Now see how easy it is to pick up!

*For fun:* Drop a pencil 10 times. How many times does it land with the point towards your pinky? How many times does it land with the point towards your thumb?

# Mouth Tools



## **BENEFITS**

We know mouth tools are sensory tools that can help the body work better and therefore help you pay attention.

## **TO BEGIN**

- Non-nutritive oral stimulation (such as chewing on rubber bands or straws) are often used by adults. Children are often seen chewing on their clothing or pencils.
- Be creative and open-minded. Help children discover acceptable Mouth Tools which work for them.
- Discuss with the children which Mouth Tools their mouths would like when they are working.
- As a group come up with everyone's favorite Mouth Tools. Make a list. See sample list below.
- Refrain from limiting mouth tools for rewards. For example a parent can give a drink with a straw for sucking to help a child maintain just the right level of attention when going down the grocery aisle.

## **SAMPLE - List of Favorite Mouth Tools**

Crunchy (like pretzels)

Chewy (like tubing)

Sucking (like a water bottle)

Biting (like an apple)

Pulling (like licorice strings)

Licking (like a lollipop)



Salty (like popcorn)

Blowing (like through a straw)

Sweet (like candy)

Sour (like warheads)

Spicy (like cinnamon)

## **Additional Project**

Have children draw a picture of their favorite mouth tool that is not on the list.

### **Supplies needed:**

*Children will need paper, crayons or markers for creating their drawings.*

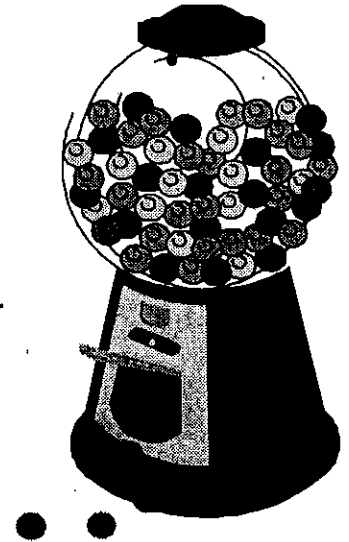
# Gum Rules

## **BENEFITS**

Chewing gum can also be a good mouth tool, when used properly.

## **TO BEGIN**

- Ask why there is usually a 'no gum' rule at school.
- Chewing gum at school is usually not allowed because school custodians have had bad experiences.
- When used as a tool, gum needs its own special set of rules. Work as a group and decide on rules for using gum in your classroom.
- Establishing rules can result in success while using this Mouth Tool.



## **SAMPLE Gum Rules**

*Keep wrapper on desk/table to put gum back when ready to throw chewed gum away.*

*Throw chewed gum in this wrapper into the waste basket before leaving the classroom.*

*Keep gum inside the mouth, keep hands away from pulling.*

*Keep mouth closed while chewing.*

*Keep mouth quiet while chewing.*

*Blowing bubbles in class is not allowed.*

## **Additional Project**

Draw a picture of what it might be like if children chewed gum at school.

### **Supplies needed:**

*Children will need paper, crayons or markers for creating their drawings.*

# Hand Fidgets

## **BENEFITS**

These tactile or touch tools can relieve stress and help you to concentrate.

## **TO BEGIN**

- Many people like to play with objects or hand fidgets with their fingers while they are thinking or listening. Adults fidget with their keys, paper clips, and even their hair.
- Doodling while talking on the telephone is common. Children's fidgets are frequently taken away because teachers fear they are distracting, and some are too noisy.
- Have children come up with a favorite hand fidget. See list below.
- Whatever the children choose, make sure it is used as a tool and not as a toy.
- Provide objects in classroom or have children also bring favorite objects from home.

### **Ideas for things your fingers can fidget with:**

Beanie-like toy

Squishy hand balls

Plastic rings  
around pop cans

Putty



Balloons stuffed with  
flour or sand

Small bags stuffed with  
beans or rice

## **Additional Project**

Have children draw a picture of their teacher's or parent's favorite hand fidget.

### **Supplies needed:**

*Children will need paper, crayons or markers for creating their drawings.*



## **BENEFITS**

Are the lights sometimes too dark or too bright? Eye Supplies can help lighting be just right for you.

## **TO BEGIN**

- Provide each child with a piece of paper and crayons and markers for drawing.
- Ask if their eyes get tired? When? Have the children draw a picture of what their eyes look like when they are tired and overworked.
- If their eyes are sensitive to the sunlight, ask them to wear sunglasses. Are sunglasses available for both outside play, as well as indoor activities?
- Evaluate lighting in the classroom. Is natural light available? Minimize the amount of glare.
- Can a floor lamp be provided to replace the fluorescent lights?
- Are there small, darker places to move into?
- Can one of the fluorescent tracks be turned off when the activity requires a "quieter" environment?
- Try different colored paper. Sometimes the strong contrast between the black lettering and the white paper can appear to cause the writing to move.



### **Other things to try so your eyes are less tired:**

A **slant board** (at a 15-25 degree angle).

A **small lamp** focused from the front on your work.

**Colored acetate** used with overhead projectors.

**Anti-glare screen for computers.**

The screen should be 15 degrees below eye level.  
Be sure to look away now and then.



# Ear Supplies

## **BENEFITS**

Everyday classroom sounds can be distracting and keep you from learning. Using ear plugs or earphones may help keep you focused while working.

## **TO BEGIN**

- Children need to be in the best writing/learning environments. "Noise" prevents that for certain children.
- Every child has his own unique reaction to everyday classroom sounds.
- Helping children achieve the best way to satisfy their personal needs in this area requires you to experiment - be creative and open-minded.
- Initially discuss with children what noises bother them in the classroom. Make a list. See "Sample List" below.
- Explore ways to counteract some of these noises. Listening to music (country, rock, rap, classical), may require earphones.
- Some students may need the environment quieter than others. Using earplugs or headphones can be helpful in reducing extraneous sounds.



### **SAMPLE - List of Classroom Noises** which can be distracting and even painful to some children

Pencil sharpener	Centers area
Intercom/telephone	Air conditioner
Teacher's voice	Lights
Other students	Fire alarm/drill
Door closing	Computer/printer

## **Additional Project**

Play different types of music for the children. While listening, have them illustrate what the music would look like if it was a picture.

### **Supplies needed:**

*Children will need paper, crayons or markers for creating their drawings.*

*Classical music, especially Baroque, has been found to be helpful during math. Marching band music can help children transition from recess outdoors to classroom work indoors.*

# Nose Supplies

## **BENEFITS**

What your nose smells can change your mood and sometimes helps you to remember things.

## **TO BEGIN**

- Discuss with the children what aromas they enjoy.
- As a group come up with everyone's favorite aroma/smell. Make a list.
- When children return to the classroom following physical education or recess, explore which smell they enjoy best to help them "settle" down (e.g. vanilla, banana or coconut).
- Citrus or pine can be used by some to keep them alert.
- As with all tools be aware of individual sensory needs. Some children with allergies or other respiratory difficulties may be uncomfortable with any smell. Commercial perfumes should be avoided.
- Aroma therapy has many benefits.

## **SAMPLE - List of Favorite Nose Tools**

Pine, Citrus, and Peppermint	<i>Can help keep you alert</i>
Vanilla, Banana, and Coconut	<i>Can help you feel more relaxed</i>

## **Additional Project**

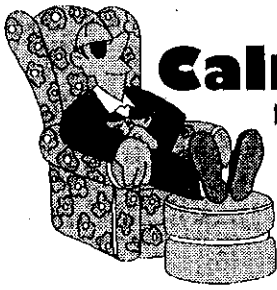
At home, using vanilla, banana or coconut could be used to complement Calming Activities (#23).

Have children draw a picture of something that is very smelly. It could be a good smell or a really horrible smell for them. Have them describe how that smell makes them feel.

### **Supplies needed:**

*Children will need paper, crayons or markers for creating their drawings.*

*Air fresheners, plug ins.*



# Calming Tools

Quieting Tools

## #23

Calming Activities

### **BENEFITS**

These tools can be used to help you feel relaxed.

### **TO BEGIN**

- Discuss with children when is it OK to be active and noisy.
- Help children decide when they need to be calm and quiet.
- Make a list of what kinds of things calm the best. (See list below).
- As you well know touch is a very powerful sensory tool. As with other sensations, some students can be defensive to touch.
- Weighted vests, weighted backpacks and weighted blankets can produce a calming effect. Ask your OT.

### **CALM AND QUIET IDEAS**

*Try as many of these as you can to discover which ones help calm you down.*

- Sit in a bean bag chair for a while and take some slow deep breaths.
- Sit in a quiet place surrounded and covered by heavy pillows.
- Rock slowly and gently in a rocking chair.
- Try the "Fragile Egg", Activity #3.
- Sit in a place where the lights, voices, and music are low and soft.
- Snuggle up in a sleeping bag or a blanket.
- Ask your teacher to spray vanilla scent.

### **ADDITIONAL "AT HOME" CALMING ideas**

- Have someone read to you.
- Have someone give you long firm hugs.
- Exchange a massage with someone.
- Watch fish in a fish tank.



# FLOPPY ON THE BALL

Quieting Tools

#24

Floppy  
on the Ball

## **BENEFITS**

Slow rhythmical rocking and the inverted position can be relaxing.

## **TO BEGIN**

- During times when calming down is a necessity, using the tool Floppy on the Ball helps individual children reach a calmer level.
- You will need an area large enough to be able to rock back and forth on a large ball.
- You will need a large ball and a strong helper to assist you.

**CAUTION:** Check with your OT to be sure you are doing this correctly. This position can lower blood pressure. If your child's face starts to get red or white, immediately and slowly pull the child back up to his feet.

## **Floppy on the Ball Instructions**

Your helper will steady the ball so you can lay across it.

Your arms will be relaxed along the side of the ball.

Your helper will place their hands gently on your back.

Turn your head to one side and let it hang.

The person helping you will rock you gently, forward and back, for a little while.



## **Supplies Needed:**

A chair ball with feet can be used.  
(Simply lie on the ball so the feet are out to the side.)

## **BENEFITS**

Recess is fun! On the playground you can experiment with different ways to move your body. And recess gives your muscles the nutrition your brain needs to help you concentrate for school work.

## **TO BEGIN**

- Share with all staff members that:
  1. Recess is one of the most important sensory tools available in school.
  2. Playground equipment provides a *sensory diet* for students to help them perform at their best throughout the day.
  3. If students are deprived of recess they can become sensory starved.
- Provide children with free time on the playground.
- Giving children time to play actually helps their performance during quiet times in the classroom.

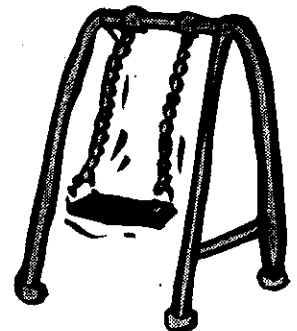
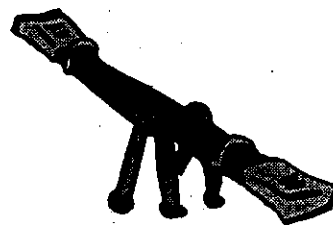
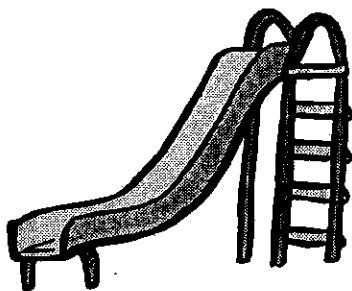
## **Additional Project**

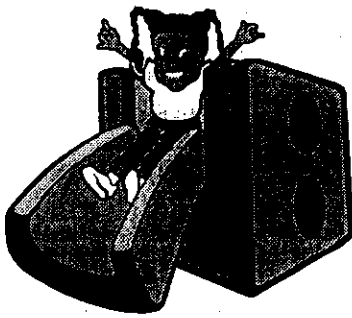
Sometimes recess is taken away for inappropriate behavior. Since movement is important, ask the children to list what other consequences they would suggest instead of taking recess away.

Have children draw a picture of what they like to play with on the playground or what they wish they had available on their dream playground.

### **Supplies needed:**

*Children will need paper, crayons or markers for creating their drawings.*





# Home Play

Survival Tools  
**#26**  
Home Play

## ***BENEFITS***

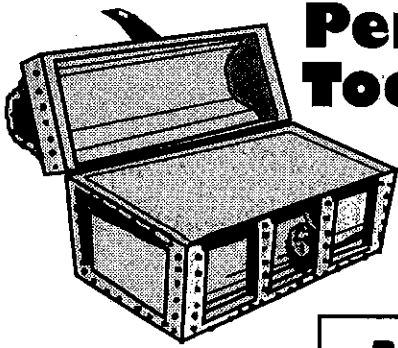
Before there is homework, there is home play. Just like recess, it prepares your body and mind for work.

## **TO BEGIN**

- We know that for children, physical activity has been found to be the key building blocks for growth.
- Have a snack ready for children soon after they arrive home from school.
- After your snack, take a short play break. This will help prepare children for doing any homework they need to complete.
- Rough and tumble play, before sit down activities, provides the rich sensory diet needed to promote attention during work.
- Movement and muscle tools can be used as breaks throughout the homework time to keep the body and mind calm and alert.

## **Home Play Instructions Before Homework**

After choosing the 'just right' movement and muscle tools, prepare the homework environment with the right positioning adjustments, functional writing warm ups, and mouth, hand, eye, ear and nose tools.



# Personalized Tool Chest

Team Collaboration  
**#27**  
Personalized  
Tool Chest

## **BENEFITS**

Now that you have learned about different tools, share them with your teachers and your parent(s). You are creating win-win partnerships.

## **TO BEGIN**

- Use the Personalized Tool Chest to build a supportive environment and assist with self-regulation.
- Encourage each child to become a self-advocate by choosing which tools work in the classroom and at home.

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

- Copy the following page and hand it to each child to complete in school or at home.
- Invite the children to share their Personalized Tool Chest with others.

## **OPTIONS**

- Use as information to formulate goals for an IEP (Individualized Education Program).
- Attach to a 504 Accommodation Plan.
- Place in the cumulative folder and update each year as the child changes teachers and grade.

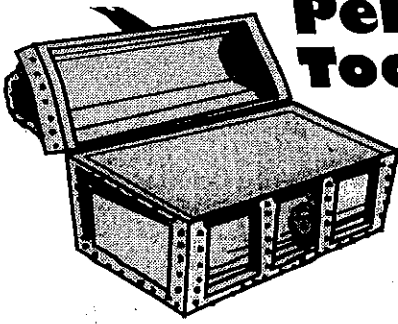
## **Additional Project**

The teacher and the parent(s) complete their own Personalized Tool Chest form and share them with the children.

### ***Supplies needed:***

*Copies of the Personalized Tool Chest form (Activity #27a) and writing tools.*





# Personalized Tool Chest

## PERSONALIZED TOOL CHEST

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher(s) \_\_\_\_\_

*Complete the blanks or make up your own*

### These tools help me be successful:

1. This helps me get ready for school (Activity # \_\_\_\_\_).  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. This helps me pay attention (Activity # \_\_\_\_\_).  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. This helps me in my work and study place (Activity # \_\_\_\_\_).  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. This helps me on the playground (Activity # \_\_\_\_\_).  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. This helps me in the cafeteria (Activity # \_\_\_\_\_).  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### These other activities also help:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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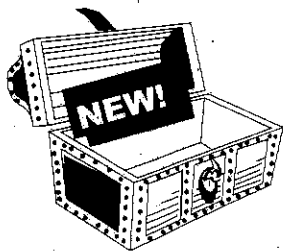
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Additional materials -Page #2

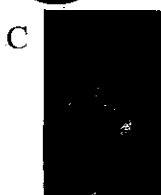
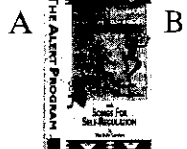
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# Facing the challenges of integrating students with disabilities

But she doesn't just present her ideas. Henry has been gleaming techniques from other countries to integrate them into ATEACHABOUT. In this way, she is constantly changing and improving the program.

She highlighted differences in Germany, for example, where kindergarteners learn more about art, music and sharing than they do about writing at a desk.

"Much of the school system there really acknowledges the importance of play and early sensory motor for children," she explains. "Here, there is such a push for kids to have better test scores. Preschool kids write at a desk, but kids' hands aren't ready for that yet. They need to be vertical and play."

## New challenges

The inconsistencies between states and districts in the same state challenge Henry. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is interpreted differently everywhere she goes. For example, two side-by-side districts in Michigan have totally different therapy procedures — one uses in-class therapy and one does not.

In Arizona, also, districts have varying degrees of resources and levels of commitment. Henry does not attribute the success of her programs to wealth in a community, however.

"In some districts that are wealthy, you'd expect there to be more programs,

more opportunities for kids and parents more involved," she said. "But that's not necessarily true."

Henry cited one inner city school district in Arizona that was in a low-income area. After presenting the workshop for teachers, she wanted to do one for parents.

"The first response was that these are poor parents, uneducated and don't speak the language," she said. "But I started it and had incredible success. Just because they don't speak English doesn't mean they don't care and are not intelligent. Not only did they come, but they brought aunts and uncles and cousins."

She credits success stories such as that to teachers who are supported by the administration.

"When they are really honored as teachers, teachers have more opportunity to be creative and to develop programs that meet their needs," she said.

"Teachers really want to help the kids, and Rick and I spread the word around the country. The teachers really are doing a great job and they wouldn't be in teaching if they didn't care about kids."

## On the road

And she attributes the success of ATEACHABOUT to her husband.

"He's really been the pivotal reason why I could do this," she said. "We've had a lot of fun together, we've seen parts of the country I'd never been. And people everywhere have been — 99.9 percent of the time — wonderful."



**BUILDING STRENGTH** — Diana Henry works with a student on the ball to help strengthen the muscles of the neck, back and shoulders. (Photo by Rick Ruess)

Henry and Ruess even use their time in the RV parks to spread their message about the importance of sensory integration. She said they meet loads of people in the parks, and everyone knows someone who knows someone on medication. She uses this time to instruct people on how to give children "the sensory diet their bodies need," instead of always resorting to medication.

Another one of her missions is to maintain contact with people she meets and presents the programs to.

"A lot of teachers have started new programs as a result of this, and we've been able to help network people together," Henry said. "It makes the program grow that much bigger. I've had people ask, 'Can you train us to do ATEACHABOUT?' Maybe we'll have a caravan."

For more information on Diana Henry's programs and services, visit her Web site at [www.ateachabout.com](http://www.ateachabout.com), e-mail her at [diana@henryot.com](mailto:diana@henryot.com), or call (888) 371-1204.

Based on the 1977 work by J.C. Pierce *The Magic Child* and adapted from presentations Henry's OT colleagues E. Richter and P. Oetter, she devised ways to integrate four different kinds of sensory safe spaces into classrooms and homes:

- **Womb space:** Students use this space to be alone in a quiet setting. They can regroup under low lights and weighted blankets or in a tent while listening to soft music to prevent "sensory overload."

- **Mother Space:** This space acts as a library nook, where two students can share space and a book with one another quietly.

- **Brain Power Space:** Most classrooms have this already, Henry said. Groups at a table or individuals at their own desks can spend time here during interactive thinking.

- **Kid power space:** This is where children can challenge themselves against gravity, Henry said. It's a place where kids can have sensory motor opportunities to assist in self-regulation of behavior and arousal levels.

In her travels, Henry notices more and more the elimination of recess or the reduction in physical education time. She was in Georgia when she learned that P.E. was no longer mandated — it was to be instituted at a principal's discretion.

"They felt kids need more time to learn in the classroom," Henry said. "My experience and background are that many kids need sensory motor time and recess to jump and climb and swing, and to have time with friends."

So she asked herself how to put those activities back in the classroom. The kid power areas need to be safe and usually involve mats in a corner, with barrels, mini trampolines, weights or therapy balls for students who get "the wiggles," Henry said.

Many teachers question the application of these ideas because classroom space is so often an issue. That's when the site visits really come into play.

"When I first started talking about this, teachers said, 'We don't have the space,'" Henry recalled. "But when I go in there, and when I look at how space is used, I find the teacher's desk is piled underneath and on top, and more frequently than not, they're not using it. They use it for storage."

So she then speaks with teachers and administrators to develop opportunities. They might design cabinets or cubbies for the teacher to store those same materials that are on the desk, remove the desk and use that area as a womb space.

"We're really working with what is there already," she said. "It's good to have dreams about what would be ideal. My workshops always start by saying, 'Suspend your disbelief. What would you ideally love to do in class, home, district, etc.?' and then realizing that we can work with this."

### Around the world

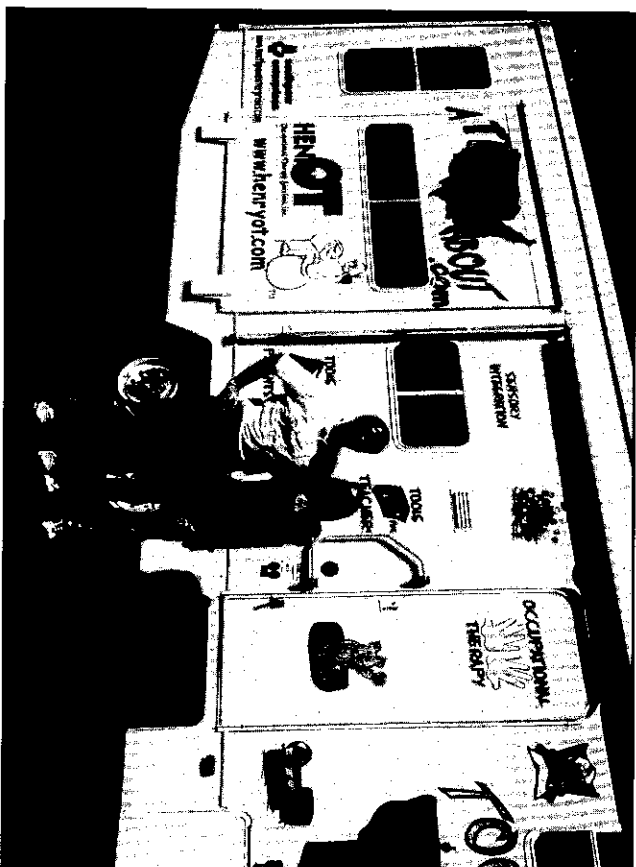
The freedom of her moving office and small staff — just one secretary — allow Henry to take ATEACHABOUT overseas. She has made presentations in The Netherlands, Germany, England and Canada, and taught an occupational therapy workshop in France last September.

"I had 200 people in my workshop getting up and doing the shakes and wiggles," she recalled. "At the end, we had a booth and people came up. In speaking with them, I realized we are on the right track."

"This is really a universal goal," Henry continued. "To integrate this into the community — to take it away from being isolated in a medical format and give information to the layperson."

While in France, she visited a school that was in the middle of shifting from therapy in isolated clinics to therapists making site visits to classrooms. She was able to offer some insight that might ease the transition.

*(continued on next page)*



**ON THE ROAD** — Diana Henry and Rick Ruess stand in front of the recreational vehicle that serves as their Ateachabout home. (Photo by Joe McGraw)

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# Program fosters inclusion by building teacher, administrative support

## ATEACHABOUT, from page 1

When her program illustrating how to integrate sensory integration into the classroom was greeted with success, Henry hit the road. First, she traveled throughout districts in Arizona.

"It grew to working with the administrative level," Henry said of the program's early days. "I realized that if teachers would be using these tools, it had to be supported by an administration that understood."

And it continued to grow, until school districts around the country heard about it and began requesting Henry to spend a few days on site at schools.

So Henry lived out of a suitcase, bringing a love of her work with her on airplanes and to hotels. But even though she was seeing beautiful landscapes and making real changes in classrooms, something was missing — her husband.

About three years ago, she and Ruess were sitting on top of a mountain in Arizona when he had the idea for ATEACHABOUT. They sold everything and have been on the road in a recreational vehicle since April 2000.

"The flexibility gives us the opportunity to meet people all over the country, all the time," she said. "Wherever we go, we finish our workshop and consultations, and always come back to our bed. Home is with us. We don't feel like we're missing anything. It's been incredible."

Since the launch of ATEACHABOUT, Henry has seen "an incredible evolution in the kinds of services we provide," she said. The flexibility of the RV allows Henry to delve deeper into problems and extend her services.

### Individual needs

For example, she can spend more time getting to know the individual needs of a community.

She remembered one school in Orange County, N.Y., where she spent time talking to occupational therapists, the special education staff, parents and children be-

fore she even demonstrated her program.

"We could speak directly about the classroom, and this tied everything in together. It wasn't just in-and-out," Henry said. "It is so important to address what their needs are. I have them tell me about the community and the challenges that we face."

And she can make unplanned stops. When Henry was in Syracuse, N.Y., about 40 people were closed out of a session she held. One of these people was an occupational therapist from LaFayette, a neighboring school district.

The occupational therapist and her school principal asked Henry to hold a mini-in-service on her way out of town — only about 30 miles down the road. She happily obliged by presenting some demonstrations and visiting some classrooms. Henry can reach more people this way than she ever thought possible.

But she doesn't just eat and run. Almost every place she has stopped has asked her to return.

For example, she visited a school in Bedford, Mich., in August whose principal asked ATEACHABOUT to come back a few months later. Coincidentally, Henry had scheduled an October visit to a school in that same district.

So she arrived a day early to catch up with the first school and see exactly how the attendees integrated what they learned in the workshop into the classrooms. Henry took photographs to post on her Web site to illustrate the effectiveness of the workshop.

### Using space

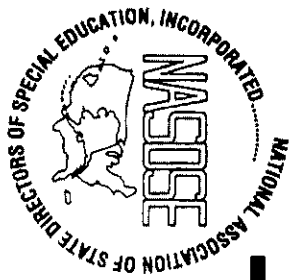
Now that her mission is mobile, Henry can spend more time helping people apply what they learn in her workshop. She has a hand in designing the actual sensory safe spaces, not just telling people about them.

In New York and Michigan, Henry spent time looking at the classroom environment so teachers could appropriately design spaces.



**HAVING A BALL** — These students at Smith Road elementary School in Bedford, Mich., sit on Ball Chairs, which are good for the body, posture and help 'take the wiggles out.'





# Counterpoint

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as a Service to Teachers and Administrators of Special Education

Spring 2001

## ATEACHABOUT goes on the road to teach schools sensory integration Strategies help teachers include all students

By Cara Muroff  
Special to Counterpoint

Last Spring, *Counterpoint* brought you the story of occupational therapist Diana Henry and ATEACHABOUT, her traveling sensory integration program loosely based on the Australian Aboriginal idea of a walkabout.

As Henry and her husband, Rick Ruess, trek across the country — and on some occasions, the ocean — spreading information to students, teachers, administrators and parents, they've impacted dozens of districts and seen the program evolve.

Henry has spent more than 20 years as an occupational therapist, and she is founder and president of Henry Occupational Therapy Services Inc. The company's mission is to promote under-

standing and awareness of issues related to sensory processing, sensory integration and the sensory systems. She works to adjust the classroom environment so students can best absorb the information that is presented.

### Early success

Henry's program developed after she started isolating the differences between therapy in a medical clinic and therapy in a school environment.

She created her program based on a teacher's perspective — one where 25 students or more are involved. Henry also created several booklets and videos, including one called *Tools for Teachers*, that play a major role in her program.

See ATEACHABOUT, page 12



**WARMING UP** — First-graders at Lafayette (N.Y.) School district warm up their hand muscles before writing activities. (Photo by Diana Henry)

## **Dedication** and **Acknowledgements** by *Diana A Henry, MS, OTR/L*

I dedicate this handbook to my mentor and good friend **Lorna Jean King, OTR/L, FAOTA**, one of the pioneers in the use of sensory integration methods in the treatment of autism. She has also championed the identification of sensory integrative deficits as the first step in the remediation of learning disabilities. Perhaps her major role has been that of teacher and mentor to young therapists.

I intentionally went to Arizona to study sensory integration under Mrs. King in 1975. Following my psychosocial and pediatric affiliations, I was invited to join her and our friend Paula Flanders Amphlett to provide sensory integrative treatment to four young children Jimmy, Steven, Carol and Paul then identified with childhood autism. Mrs. King brought sensory integration to life in her backyard, with tree swings, wheelbarrows rides, digging with shovels, towel rubdowns after swimming, peeling oranges for snack time, and the touch pressure 'hot dog' game for quiet time.

Mrs. King created The Children's Center for Neurodevelopmental Studies Inc. (CCNS) to expand the availability of sensory integration through education, research and services. Now under the direction of Mrs. King's daughter Kay Marie King, CCNS provides a state certified school for children with autism, therapy services for children with developmental delays, and research opportunities for students/scholars around the world.

Thank you Mrs. King for sharing your wisdom and for providing hope with solutions to so many parents. Your insights on *Challenging Behaviors* found in this handbook will assist the reader in becoming a better detective.

## **Acknowledgements**

A special thank you to **Carla Norris**, who brought her son Kevin to my clinic many years ago for sensory integrative treatment. As an important member of our team for over 8 years, Carla continues to provide information and support to the many parents who come to Henry OT Services inquiring about occupational therapy and sensory integration. In Carla's words "I contributed to this *Tools for Parents™* handbook by sharing the ideas I used in the most important job I ever attempted: being Kevin's mom." Carla, her husband David and Kevin have reason to feel proud as they look forward to Kevin beginning his first year at the University of Arizona in the fall of 2001.

I would like to thank **Lisa Koschka** my Austrian/American friend who once again provided guidance by editing this manuscript with much encouragement, love and care.

A heartfelt thanks to **Monica McWhorter** and her parents **Pam** and **David McWhorter**. By participating in the *Tools for Teachers* video, their message of honoring individual sensory needs has been seen and heard by parents, children, teachers and therapists around the world. In August 2000, Monica proudly represented Arizona in Miss Jr. America Pageant, speaking to kids on 'believing in yourself.'

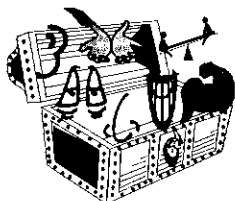
In addition, I wish to thank **Lucy Miller** for providing relentless encouragement to use email and to the many colleagues who answered my questions through the various list serves including **Norma Eagles**, **Angela Sallerson**, **Deanna Sava** and **Geela Spira**. Also my colleagues **Rhoda Erhardt**, **Sheila Frick** and **Judy Reisman** who provided important information in their respective areas of expertise and **Judith Schoonover** for her contribution to this handbook with introduction to *Social Stories*.

I'd also like to recognize **Ricardo Carrasco**, **Meghan Gourley**, **Carol Kranowitz**, **Patricia Lemer**, **Heather Miller**, **Vicky Mlyniec**, **Cara Muroff**, **Victoria Nackley**, **Gretchen Reeves**, **Evelyn Vuko** and **Miera Zucker** who through their writing have added to the information available for parents, teachers, and therapists, **Mary Bennett** and **Andy Roussey** who have provided continued support to those working with sensory integration, **Woodie Ryan**, for the great inspiration she has given to so many of us, and **Marcia Smith** who made the *Tools for Parents* program possible in Arizona. I also thank my friend **Anne Spencer** for expanding my love for occupational therapy and sensory integration through her paintings, colors, music, the ocean and the World Federation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT).

And finally, thank you **Benjamin**, **Corinne**, **Nicholas**, and **Christopher**, for contributing your feelings and thoughts on friendship.

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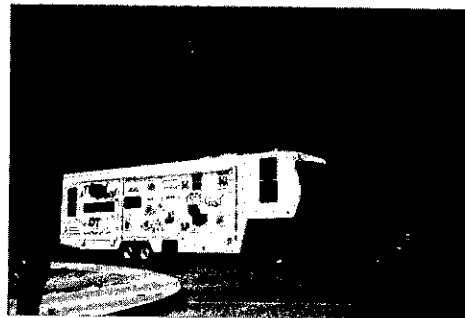
## Who are the authors in Henry OT Services, Inc?

**Diana A. Henry**, founder of Henry OT Services, Inc., opened her clinic specializing in sensory integration (SI) in 1984. Diana earned the *1997 Outstanding Occupational Therapist Award* from the Arizona Occupational Therapy Association. She is also an honorary member of the German Society for Sensory Integration – Jean Ayres (GSID). In 2000, Diana was nominated to be on the Advisory Board of the Non-Verbal Learning Disability Association (NVLD), and in 2001 she was presented with the award for Outstanding Therapeutic Contribution by the Developmental Delay Resources.

Diana is both SCSIT and SIPT certified. She received her B.S. in OT from Tufts University in Boston, and her M.S. in sensory integration from Rush University in Chicago. Diana is a member of the International Speakers Association. She has taught at Arizona State University, nationally to school districts, associations and clinics and internationally in Germany, Canada, the Netherlands, England and France. Diana produced the *Tools for Teachers™* and the *Tools for Students™* videos and the *Tool Chest™* handbook to make SI **user-friendly** for all.

**Rick Ruess**, Diana's husband and partner, is the marketing manager for Henry OT Services, Inc. He designs graphics to provide schools, homes and businesses with information and products on sensory integration.

Rick created **ATEACHABOUT™** and, since January 2000, has been traveling with Diana across the United States and abroad presenting workshops for administrators, teachers, parents, caregivers, therapists and other professionals. Living full-time in their graphically enhanced 5<sup>th</sup>-wheel home has given them the flexibility to address individual community needs and develop sensory safe environments for all children and adults.



**Tamara J. Wheeler-Rhodes** joined Diana's clinic as a volunteer prior to attending Arizona School of Health Sciences, Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine. Since obtaining her M.S. in occupational therapy in 1998, Tammy has continued providing services for Henry OT Services, Inc. in homes and school districts throughout Arizona, emphasizing sensory integration. Tammy collaborated with Diana in implementing the *Tools for PE Teachers™* and the *Tools For Parents™* programs in Arizona. In 2000, Tammy and her husband Alan were blessed with beautiful baby Sarah.

## What is the *Tools For Parents™* handbook?

The *Tools For Parents™* handbook was created from a program first developed and successfully implemented by Diana A. Henry, MS, OTR/L and Tammy J. Wheeler-Rhodes, MS, OTR/L during the 1999-2000 school year in the Isaac School District in Arizona. It is a handbook of **tools**, which helps parents, caretakers, therapists and children **bring sensory integration into the home**. These tools may be used to address challenging behaviors and enhance attention and motor skills. They can be integrated into the **discrete trial teaching (DTT)** often used in **Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)** programs. Based on sensory integration and occupational therapy strategies, these "over-the-counter tools" help parents become detectives in understanding their children's behaviors and needs.

# Why was the *Tools For Parents*<sup>TM</sup> handbook written?

Parents were the first to identify the issues highlighted in this handbook. We surveyed parents to ascertain in what areas they felt they needed assistance. The *Tools for Parents*<sup>TM</sup> handbook addresses activities identified in the occupation of parenting.

## Topics and Activities:

- **Parent Sensory Tools Survey:** Honoring *your* sensory needs as an adult
- **Discovering Your Child's Sensory Needs:** Becoming a detective
- **Getting Ready:** Preparing the body to start the day, for transitions, bedtime and more
- **The Homework Place:** Creating sensory-safe spaces for learning
- **Can't Sit Still:** Tips for sitting including the reasons for dynamic sitting
- **Scissors, Pencils and Computers:** Prevention, development & safety with ergonomics
- **Seeing:** Preparing the eyes, body and environment
- **Playgrounds and Parks:** Promoting safety during KID POWER time
- **Holiday Helpers:** Surviving and enjoying the holidays
- **Heavy Jobs:** Indoor and outdoor muscle activities for work and play
- **Making Friends:** Skills for honoring individual differences and developing a circle of friends
- **Challenging Behaviors and Introduction to Social Stories**
- **My Child's Tool Chest:** Listing the sensory **tools** that work for your child.

## How does the *Tools For Parents*<sup>TM</sup> handbook work?

The handbook emphasizes the SENSORY INTEGRATION concepts highlighted in:

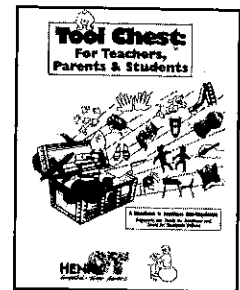


*Tools for Teachers*<sup>TM</sup>  
video



*Tools for Students*<sup>TM</sup>  
video

and reinforces the *Tool Chest*<sup>TM</sup> handbook of activities used by teachers and therapists in the classroom.



## Sensory tools emphasize:

**Movement (vestibular):** to get going and to calm down

**Muscles (proprioceptive):** to develop upper body control for sitting and writing

**Positions:** to check for proper sitting and alternatives

**Writing/Cutting:** to develop the pre-writing and computer hand muscles

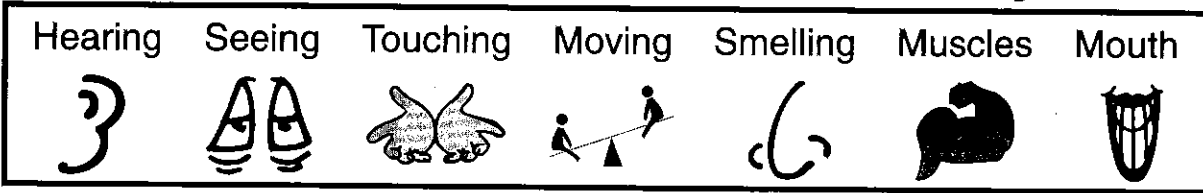
**Mouth:** to encourage safe effective use of oral motor input

**Eyes, Hands, Ears, and Nose:** to alert and prevent sensory overload

**Quieting (touch pressure):** to calm and address touch defensiveness

**Home Play and Recess:** for attention and making friends.

# Parent Sensory Tools Survey



Complete with all of these categories in mind

1. To help me wake up in the morning, I usually need to

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(take a cold shower, drink hot coffee, take a brisk walk)

2. When I prepare for bed or to calm myself, I prefer to

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(eat a snack, turn the lights down, listen to music or TV, snuggle under a blanket)

3. What I like most about my home is

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(cozy or open spaces, large windows, soft or firm furniture, scents of candles or potpourri)

4. When I am frustrated or upset, it helps to

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(go to the gym, take a walk, sit on the porch, listen to music, go to my room and close the door, take a bath, curl up and read a book, call a friend)

5. When I need to read or study, I prefer to

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(sit at a table, lounge on the couch, use a rocking chair)

6. When I need to concentrate, the environment I create includes

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(quiet or music, food and/or drink, bright or dim light, solitude or others around)

7. When I need to listen at a meeting, I usually find myself

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(doodling, playing with small objects like paper clips or pens, chewing on pencils, pens or straws, snacking, drinking coffee or soda)

**You may also find it very helpful to speak with your child and other family members about these situations. How similar or different are your sensory needs?**

# Discovering Your Child's Sensory Needs

## PROBLEMS:

My child...

- is very irritable
- is inattentive and becomes easily distracted
- has difficulty keeping still
- can't keep his hands to himself
- constantly chews on clothing or other objects
- appears hyper-sensitive... covers his ears... squints his eyes...avoids touching certain textures...dislikes being touched
- is often labeled 'lazy' or unmotivated.



## GOALS:



Understanding  
Your Child



- **Become a detective:** Learn about your child's sensory preferences. Just like you, every child has his own sensory needs.
- **Utilize sensory tools safely and effectively:** Recognize that many factors may influence changes in your child's sensory needs from day to day, from activity to activity and even from minute to minute.
- **Teach others to understand:** Sensory preferences are to be honored. Individual sensory needs are not to be judged as good or bad, right or wrong. They just are.
- **Teach your child to be a self-advocate:** Put the control in your child's hands by teaching him how to ask for what he needs, in socially appropriate ways.

## SOLUTIONS:

**Step 1: Think about the following 7 categories throughout the day and in every situation**

Hearing

Seeing

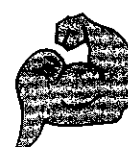
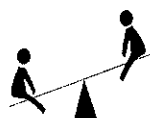
Touching

Moving

Smelling

Muscles

Mouth



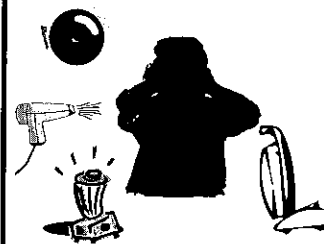
# Discovering Your Child's Sensory Needs



## Hearing:

Observe your child's response to different types of music or sounds.

- Minimize verbal directions. Your child may have difficulty processing verbal input, especially if the environment is noisy.
- Sounds can be perceived as irritating or even painful.
- Earplugs, headphones or even background noises can help counteract irritating sounds.
- If using headphones, the volume should be between #2 and #4 (digital) to avoid damaging the hair cells in the ear.
- Your child may enjoy background 'white sound' when in her quiet 'womb' space.
- Listening difficulties may include problems with the ability to accurately perceive, process and respond to sounds. They may also be related to movement, timing and postural problems. In addition to sensory integrative treatment, evaluations which include sound-based technologies may be warranted.



Volume between #2 ... #4



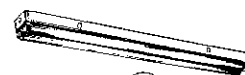
## Seeing:

Observe how your child reacts to various types of lighting.

- Your child may prefer darker spaces over brightly lit areas.
- Bright lights can cause glare and be irritating, while natural or dimmed lights tend to be calming.
- Try visual cues such as pictures, charts or short printed directions for chores and daily care activities.
- Certain positions can promote visual control.



Go to **Seeing** pages for more information.

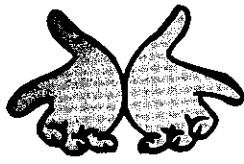


FRIDAY AFTERNOON		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	good job!	✓
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		✓
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	you did it!	✓
<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input type="checkbox"/>		

See Resources for information on visual schedules.



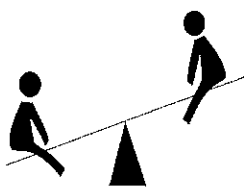
# Discovering Your Child's Sensory Needs



## Touching:

Respect your child's responses to different types of tactile or touch input.

- When your child complains that 'it hurts' or pulls away, acknowledge that what she is feeling is real for her.
- Experiment with different types of materials and clothing. Terry cloth, tight and soft cotton or lycra can be calming and soothing. See Resources for specialized clothing.
- Play the 'sandwich game' and apply calming pressure touch. Let your child crawl between large pillows or roll up in a large terry cloth towel (with the head and arms out) as a burrito or hot dog. Pretend to add ingredients with your hands slowly, firmly, from head to toe. See *Tools for Students™* video.
- When your child needs to think or pay attention, experiment with a variety of small hand fidgets such as: squishy (porcupine ball), smooth (slinky), textured (finger monster), and soft (beanie animal).



## Moving:

Use movement activities to help with balance, posture, coordination, eye movements, making transitions, attention, alertness, calming and even to change your child's emotional state.

- Up and down movements (jumping rope, bouncing on a ball chair or trampoline) may help your child wake up and get going. Be creative and play a game of hopscotch or make up a silly dance.
- Back and forth movements (swinging, sitting in a rocking chair) may help your child calm down. Put a swing on the porch or in the back yard. Ask your child's teacher how often the swings are available to her during the school day.



Go to **Can't Sit Still** for more information.

# Discovering Your Child's Sensory Needs



## Mouth:

Use oral motor activities. Find what works for your child to calm, alert and increase focus

such as...

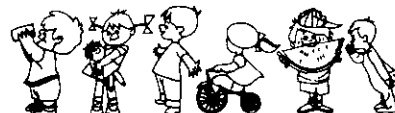
- sucking on mild flavors, blowing, and slow breathing
- eating or sucking sour, salty or spicy
- crunching or chewing on resistive foods, gum or latex-free tubing.

Consult with your pediatrician and nutritionist to identify possible **allergies**.



## Step 2: Detective tips to keep in mind:

### • Observe, Observe, Observe!

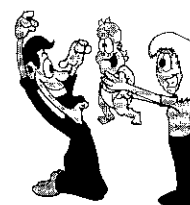


- Whether it's 'getting ready' time, homework time, playtime, mealtime or bedtime, be aware of your child's unique sensory needs at different times of the day for specific environments.

- Think about modifying the environment and/or the activity to better meet your child's sensory needs.



- Add or take away sensory input.



- Change the intensity, the duration and the location of the sensory stimulus on or around your child's body.

- Create opportunities for your child to be actively engaged in taking in the sensation.



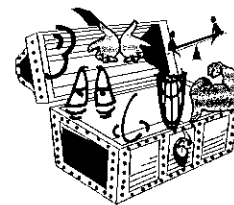
- As a parent, your detective work will be ongoing.



- Work together with your child, family, friends and school community. With teamwork, there will always be plenty of good ideas to meet your child's sensory needs. Be creative, flexible and have fun.



- Your child will become the expert in forming her own Tool Chest of ideas. Empowered with these **tools**, she will meet her day-to-day challenges with increasing understanding and success.



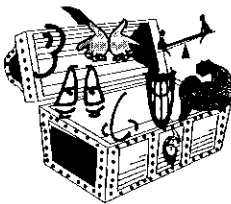
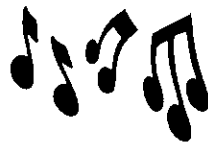
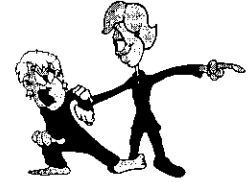
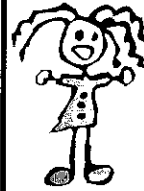
# Getting Ready



## PROBLEMS:

My child...

- can't seem to get herself and her things organized
- becomes 'stressed out' while getting ready for school
- becomes irritable during transition times
- does not want to stop what she is doing when it's time to go home
- does not like going to bed.



## GOALS:

- Learn how to integrate sensory strategies into your child's daily transitions and routines at home and school. Transitions are as important as the activities themselves. As Betty Snow, RN and SI movement specialist, would often say, "the silence between the notes also creates the music."
- Discover how sensory **tools** can be used to support transitions.

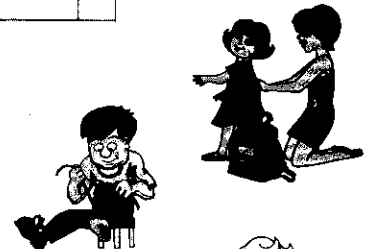
## SOLUTIONS:

### STEP 1: Starting the Day

Make a schedule with your child. Being rushed or stressed can put a child's sensory system on alert and overload. Some children need more time in the morning.

- As a parent, you may need to allow plenty of time to start your day without rushing, even if it means getting up earlier.
- Discuss how much time is needed for each task such as: "it takes 10 minutes to eat, 6 minutes to dress, etc."
- Prepare things the night before such as organizing backpacks (backpacks), laying out clothes, planning breakfast.
- Use music and songs to sequence activities such as dressing.
- Be consistent with your schedule. A visual or auditory timer may be helpful.

Friday Morning		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	good job!	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	you did it!	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>



See Resources for transition songs and visual schedules.

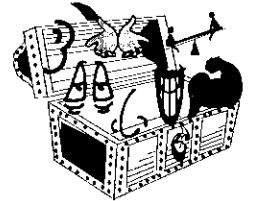
# Getting Ready



## STEP 2 : Throughout the day, at home, with friends and at school

- Collaborate with family, friends and school. Encourage your family and your child's teacher to discuss daily plans with your child.
- Explore ways they can make sure your child knows what is going to be next. Discuss which sensory **tools** they can use.

Explore the 7 categories and see what works for them in their specific environments to help your child.



### Tips and Ideas



#### Hearing

- **Listening to Baroque music** can capture attention, calm and help focus your child when getting ready for school.



#### Seeing

- **Using a visual chart** with step by step activities sequenced in order can assist in getting ready to follow daily routines.



#### Touching

- **Wearing a weighted vest** intermittently (approximately 15 minutes on and 20 minutes off, especially if your child is not moving his center of gravity) provides maintained firm pressure touch. This can assist in calming and organizing when getting ready to go into a group situation.  
See Resources for information on the Bear Hug.



#### Moving

- **Bouncing on a chair ball** holding onto its small feet, from the kitchen to the homework place, can help your child's body get ready for work.



#### Smelling

- **Having a scented lamp** with your child's favorite calming smell can help your child slow down when getting ready for bed.



#### Muscles

- **Marching to rhythmical music** with a steady beat can assist in getting ready for transitioning from outside to indoor activities .



#### Mouth

- **Crunching on carrot sticks** or popcorn can help your child focus when getting ready for (and during) homework time.

**Be creative and have fun!**

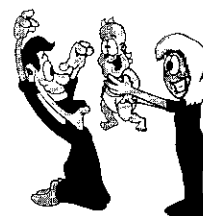
# Getting Ready



## STEP 3 : Ending the day

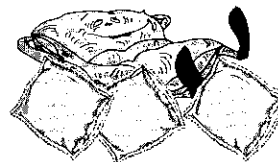
Many things can make bedtime more difficult including ...

- unexpected touch sensations like tickling or taking a shower. These types of activities can 'wake up' the senses when the goal is to calm down and go to sleep
- too much visual or auditory stimulation such as TV or video games prior to bedtime
- not enough time to prepare for bed. Remember, routines often help with transitions
- scratchy or rough bedding. These types of textures can be irritating and alerting to sensitive skin.



### Tips for bedtime include ...

- a warm bath (not too hot though!)
- a five minute body rub-down in a large terry cloth towel and/or with unscented lotion. Be sure to use slow rhythmic downward strokes in the direction the hair grows.
- calming scents such as vanilla or lavender (ask your aroma therapist for suggestions)
- a soft, snuggly blanket
- many pillows or a body pillow
- a sleeping bag which can retain the body's heat, inducing a calming sensation from the neutral warmth
- quiet rhythmic music or background sounds such as a fan
- snuggling with a bedtime story, especially poetry with strong rhythm and rhyme.

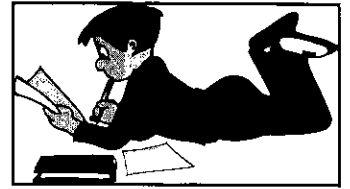


# The Homework Place

## PROBLEMS:

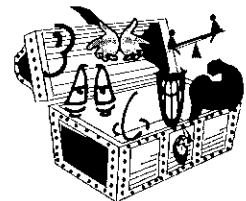
My child...

- is often out of her seat
- falls out of the chair
- complains of being too tired
- loses attention
- constantly needs reminders to complete tasks.



## GOALS:

- Together with your child, discover the 'just right' fit for her
- Develop a sensory-safe environment. Remember the seven categories from the *Parent Sensory Tools Survey*
- Create opportunities for optimal attention
- Prevent ergonomic casualties.



## SOLUTIONS:

### Step 1: Be a detective

- Observe your child during a typical homework session
- Look at the homework ENVIRONMENT (seating, sounds, lighting, etc.)
- Discover the source of homework frustrations and potential difficulties specific to your child
- Detect whether your child's sensory needs are being met. These may be different from YOUR sensory needs.



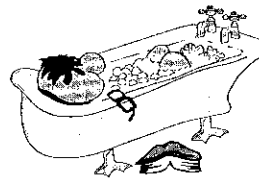
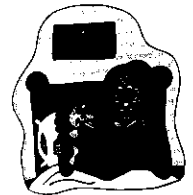
# The Homework Place



## Step 2: Explore alternative positions

Sitting at a desk or table may be fatiguing or distracting. To increase attention and enhance posture, suggest the following to your child:

- **Lie on your stomach and read a book**  
(great for shoulder stability, which is important for writing)
- **Write or draw on paper or a board attached to the wall**  
(the upright position is ergonomically beneficial)
- **Sit under a tree or snuggle into a cozy space**
- **Sit in a large beanbag chair with a weighted blanket on top**  
(touch pressure is often calming and organizing)
- **Read in the bath tub filled with warm water.**



## Step 3: Provide movement

Movement often helps increase the level of alertness. Use movement when memorizing multiplication tables or spelling words. Break homework into 10-15 minute segments interspersed with activities from **HEAVY JOBS** or movement such as:

- **Jumping rope**



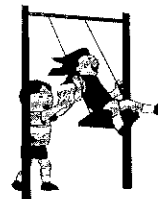
- **Bouncing on a trampoline**



- **Rocking in a rocking chair**



- **Swinging**



## Step 4: Provide dynamic sitting

Dynamic sitting is often best for the body according to ergonomic standards.



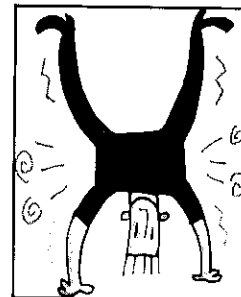
See **Can't Sit Still** for details

# Can't Sit Still

## PROBLEMS:

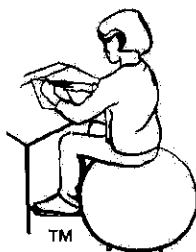
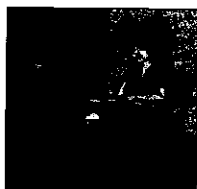
My child...

- slumps in her seat and lies on the table
- always seems to be wiggly and squirming when she is supposed to sit still
- constantly gets up out of her chair.



## GOALS:

- Detect your child's unique sensory preferences before and during 'sitting' activities
- Discover how movement may prepare your child for sitting
- Improve posture with dynamic sitting during eating and tabletop activities.



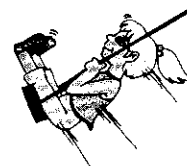
## SOLUTIONS:

### Step 1: Prior to quiet sitting

Children need good nutrition from food, and they also need sensory experiences for their body and brain. If your child has difficulty sitting still, she may need more movement experiences throughout the day or prior to sitting activities. As a parent, you can encourage and allow your child to move.

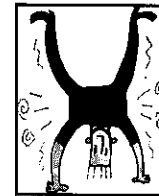
### Some activities include ...

- up and down movements on a chair ball, trampoline or with a jump rope
- back and forth movements on a swing, in a rocking chair or stroller
- activities such as dancing, running, jumping, sliding, rolling
- helping with chores. See **HEAVY JOBS** for ideas.





# Can't Sit Still



## Step 2: During quiet sitting in a typical chair

If your child tends to wiggle or squirm in her seat, you may need to use a sensory strategy. Firm pressure touch (like a hug) tends to calm and quiet the body.

### Some strategies include ...

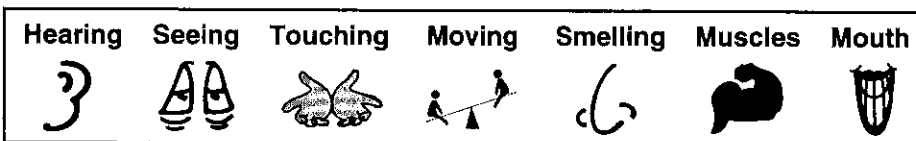
- wearing a heavy coat, weighted vest, or Bear Hug
- putting something on her lap (book bag, lap tray, heavy pillow)
- performing a heavy job intermittently throughout the activity.

See **HEAVY JOBS**.

For additional activities, think about the...

### 7 categories

For example:



A mother needs her small child to sit still in the grocery cart. She gives her child a box of raisins to eat while they shop. As you can see, several of the sensory categories listed above are involved. The box of raisins (which provides seeing, touching, smelling and mouth **tools**) helps her to sit still without becoming wiggly or fussy.

## Step 3: During quiet sitting on an unstable surface

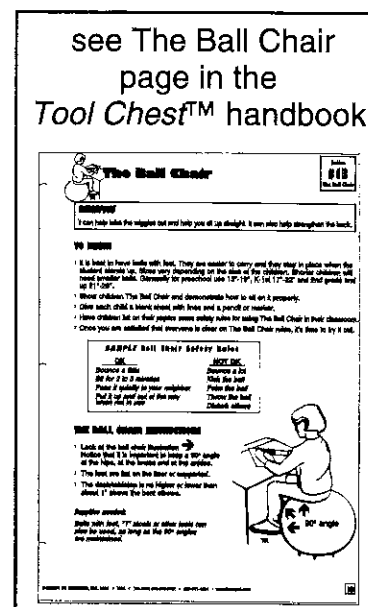
Dynamic or active sitting on an unstable surface can provide your child with the little bit of additional movement she may need to maintain attention.

### Dynamic sitting prevents ergonomic casualties by ...

- challenging and supporting the spinal muscles of the back
- facilitating and training the body in an upright posture
- preventing uneven pressure on vertebral discs
- preventing constant one-sided strain
- promoting flexibility of the spine, joints and ligaments
- enhancing balance
- encouraging health and, over time, preventing postural deconditioning and back pain.

### Other dynamic sitting alternatives include ...

'T' stools, wedges and inflated disks. Each item varies in the type of input it provides. Together with your child, find which works **best for her**.

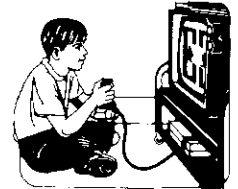
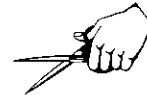
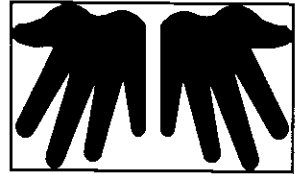


# Scissors, Pencils & Computers

## PROBLEMS:

My child...

- holds the pencil with an awkward grasp
- complains that his hands hurt when writing
- does not use scissors accurately
- complains of headaches and back pain when using the computer
- engages in computer games for long periods of time.



## GOALS:

- Work as a team to help your child enjoy developing and improving hand skills.
- Teach your family ergonomically sound positioning and safe work habits at the computer. Researchers are finding that children as young as 11 and 12 are at risk of developing repetitive-strain injury, thanks to an increase in computer use and poor ergonomics.

## SOLUTIONS:

### *Step 1: Warm Up!*

It may help to 'warm up' the muscles of the hands, arms and shoulders before doing any writing or cutting activities. Do weight-bearing activities such as: push-ups (on the floor or against a wall) and animal walks (on hands and knees). Warm up the hands and fingers with clay, thera-putty or squeeze balls.



### **A great activity alone (or with a group) for grip strength:**

Have your child roll out 1 part blue Crayola Magic Model® compound with three parts yellow. Then the magic begins. Squeeze forever and a day and you get wonderful marbled feedback, as the yellow and blue make green. Encourage your child to make letters out of his clay and really keep playing with it because once he rolls it out with a small rolling pin that's the end of touching it. Roll the clay out and use a shamrock cookie cutter. The clay dries fairly quickly. On the BACK he can write his initials very LIGHTLY. If your child uses heavy pressure he will get immediate feedback if this is not done correctly. Put a magnet on the back and you have one refrigerator magnet coming right up. Your child may want to put his name on the front after MUCH practice concerning space and pressure. He can decorate the edges with small holes all the way around, using a paper clip for the holes.

Note: This activity was generously provided by Christine Rockett, OTR/L

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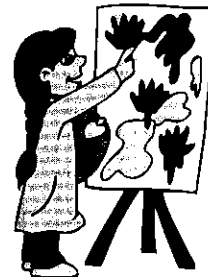
# Scissors, Pencils & Computers



## Step 2: Do It Right!

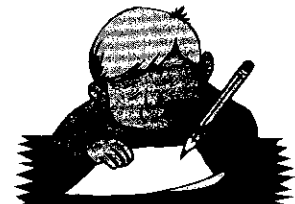


A younger child's little hands may not be ready for fine motor writing skills. Encourage 'hand games' involving pinching, pulling, squeezing and ripping (see Hand Games page in the *Tool Chest™* handbook). Using vertical surfaces to make shapes, scribbles, and upright wiggles is a great way to prepare young arms, wrists, hands and fingers BEFORE introducing the pencil. Use a dry erase board or tack up a large sheet of poster paper. Remember, creativity is the key!



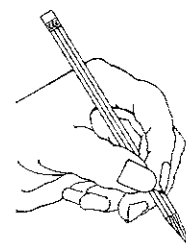
## Step 3: Hold It!

The 'correct' way to hold a pencil is with a tripod (three finger) grasp (see Pencil Holding in the *Tool Chest™* handbook). Various types of grips are available and may help teach young children to hold a pencil correctly. However, an older child may have developed a habit of holding a pencil a different way. If your child struggles with handwriting, speak with the occupational therapist. Various types of writing utensils are available. It may be necessary to limit the amount of handwriting with the use of a word processor, computer or tape recorder. This can help him feel good about himself without the added stress and time involved with handwriting.



## Step 4: Get With The Program!

Just as there are different learning styles, there are many ways to learn how to write. Children who experience handwriting difficulties will often succeed with a multi-sensory approach. There are many great handwriting programs that integrate the senses of movement, muscles, touch, hearing and seeing. See Resources for a list of handwriting programs. Collaborate with your child's occupational therapist and teacher to find the one that works for you at home and at school.



# Scissors, Pencils & Computers



## Step 5: The Right Fit!

Repetitive strain injury (RSI) may result from improper positioning at the computer workstation. Injury to the back, neck and even carpal tunnel syndrome may result from improper positioning.

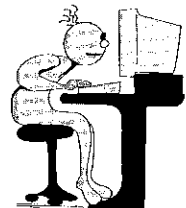


Teach your child to watch for the following RSI warning signs:

- Rubbing the forearm, elbow, wrist, or neck
- Trouble picking things up or frequently dropping things
- Complaining of numbness or tingling

Children should not sit hunched over the keyboard with shoulders forward. Make sure your child is able to sit up straight with the back supported, feet flat on the floor, not dangling or wrapped around the chair. An adjustable chair and a footstool may be a simple solution. The computer workstation should have an adjustable keyboard to fit the child. The mouse needs to be held in a relaxed and comfortable manner. The monitor should be placed at eye level and arm's distance away. Enforce a 30-minute rule when your child works with the computer. As a reminder, monitoring software packages are available that note how long they've been using the computer and suggest exercises for different muscles.

incorrect



correct



Go to **Can't Sit Still** for more information on using a chair ball for dynamic sitting.

## Step 6: The Eyes Have It!

Focusing on the computer screen for extended periods of time may lead to eye discomfort, fatigue, blurred vision, eye focusing or accommodative problems, eye irritation and headaches. Prevent these problems by encouraging your child to take a ten-minute break, at least every 30-minutes. Also, check the level of brightness of the screen and the level of light in the room. Light levels that are too high can contribute to excessive glare. Check for glare on the screen from windows or other light sources. The computer can be turned to prevent glare from hitting the screen. A light source can be moved or blocked from hitting the screen with a cardboard hood (called a baffle) attached to the top of the monitor. A glare screen may also be a good solution. Make sure it has the American Optometric Association Seal of Acceptance.

take a break



check lighting



check positioning

Go to **SEEING** for more information.

Some informative web sites include:  
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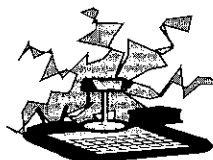
# Seeing



## PROBLEMS:

My child...

- has difficulty with eye movements
- frequently squints while she is reading
- often chooses low-lit spaces
- blinks and turns away from bright lights
- complains that lights are too noisy.



## GOALS:

- Encourage your infant or young child to develop good visual skills
- Discover sensory **tools** that may help your child improve reading skills
- Modify your home environment to meet your child's needs
- Provide information to school staff regarding your child's visual sensory needs.

## SOLUTIONS:

### Step 1: Tummy time and motor time

Medical professionals emphasize positioning infants on their backs. There are valid concerns regarding sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) when a child is asleep or left unattended. Yet, when your infant or child is awake and you are with her, it is important to experience plenty of time on her tummy.

**This position helps promote stability and develops the muscles needed for head control and visual skills.**

- Be sure to use a firm surface with a sheet or thin blanket (fluffy quilts or comforters can be too smothering for small babies)
- Encourage him to lift his head to look at you or some enticing toys

Play with total body movements, throwing and catching rather than remaining stationary in front of the TV and computer.



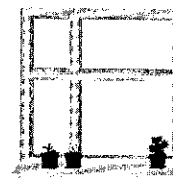
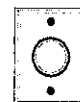
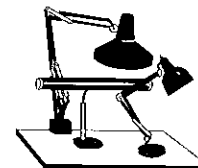
# Seeing



**Step 2: Your child may need dim or diffused lighting especially during reading activities.**

**Some alternatives include ...**

- installing low wattage light bulbs in overhead fixtures or lamps
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- using colored overlays or changing the position of the book by using a slant board. Book pages with glossy finishes may create a glare in bright lighting. This may be irritating, causing your child to squint or lose attention.
- using sunglasses or hats, even for indoor use.



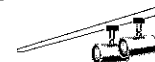
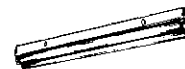
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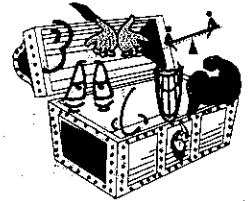
# Getting Ready



## STEP 2 : Throughout the day, at home, with friends and at school

- Collaborate with family, friends and school. Encourage your family and your child's teacher to discuss daily plans with your child.
- Explore ways they can make sure your child knows what is going to be next. Discuss which sensory **tools** they can use.

Explore the 7 categories and see what works for them in their specific environments to help your child.



### Tips and Ideas



#### Hearing

- **Listening to Baroque music** can capture attention, calm and help focus your child when getting ready for school.



#### Seeing

- **Using a visual chart** with step by step activities sequenced in order can assist in getting ready to follow daily routines.



#### Touching

- **Wearing a weighted vest** intermittently (approximately 15 minutes on and 20 minutes off, especially if your child is not moving his center of gravity) provides maintained firm pressure touch. This can assist in calming and organizing when getting ready to go into a group situation.  
See Resources for information on the Bear Hug.



#### Moving

- **Bouncing on a chair ball** holding onto its small feet, from the kitchen to the homework place, can help your child's body get ready for work.



#### Smelling

- **Having a scented lamp** with your child's favorite calming smell can help your child slow down when getting ready for bed.



#### Muscles

- **Marching to rhythmical music** with a steady beat can assist in getting ready for transitioning from outside to indoor activities .



#### Mouth

- **Crunching on carrot sticks** or popcorn can help your child focus when getting ready for (and during) homework time.

**Be creative and have fun!**

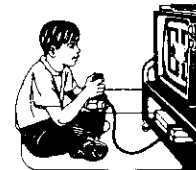
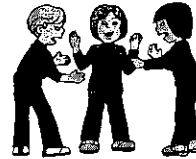
# Getting Ready



## STEP 3 : Ending the day

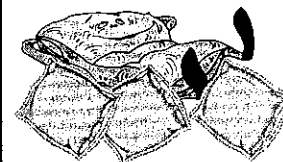
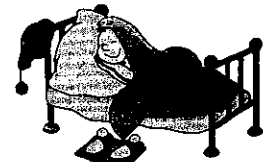
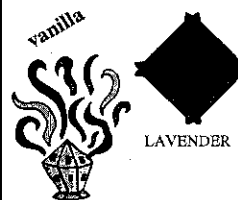
Many things can make bedtime more difficult including ...

- unexpected touch sensations like tickling or taking a shower. These types of activities can 'wake up' the senses when the goal is to calm down and go to sleep
- too much visual or auditory stimulation such as TV or video games prior to bedtime
- not enough time to prepare for bed. Remember, routines often help with transitions
- scratchy or rough bedding. These types of textures can be irritating and alerting to sensitive skin.



### Tips for bedtime include ...

- a warm bath (not too hot though!)
- a five minute body rub-down in a large terry cloth towel and/or with unscented lotion. Be sure to use slow rhythmic downward strokes in the direction the hair grows.
- calming scents such as vanilla or lavender (ask your aroma therapist for suggestions)
- a soft, snuggly blanket
- many pillows or a body pillow
- a sleeping bag which can retain the body's heat, inducing a calming sensation from the neutral warmth
- quiet rhythmic music or background sounds such as a fan
- snuggling with a bedtime story, especially poetry with strong rhythm and rhyme.





# The Homework Place

## PROBLEMS:

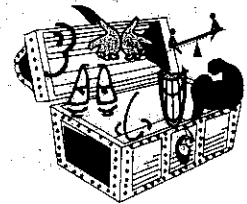
My child...

- is often out of her seat
- falls out of the chair
- complains of being too tired
- loses attention
- constantly needs reminders to complete tasks.



## GOALS:

- Together with your child, discover the 'just right' fit for her
- Develop a sensory-safe environment. Remember the seven categories from the *Parent Sensory Tools Survey*
- Create opportunities for optimal attention
- Prevent ergonomic casualties.



## SOLUTIONS:

### Step 1: Be a detective

- Observe your child during a typical homework session
- Look at the homework ENVIRONMENT (seating, sounds, lighting, etc.)
- Discover the source of homework frustrations and potential difficulties specific to your child
- Detect whether your child's sensory needs are being met. These may be different from YOUR sensory needs.



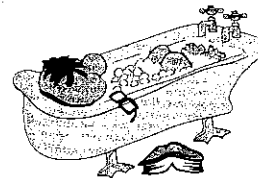
# The Homework Place



## Step 2: Explore alternative positions

Sitting at a desk or table may be fatiguing or distracting. To increase attention and enhance posture, suggest the following to your child:

- **Lie on your stomach and read a book**  
(great for shoulder stability, which is important for writing)
- **Write or draw on paper or a board attached to the wall**  
(the upright position is ergonomically beneficial)
- **Sit under a tree or snuggle into a cozy space**
- **Sit in a large beanbag chair with a weighted blanket on top**  
(touch pressure is often calming and organizing)
- **Read in the bath tub filled with warm water.**



## Step 3: Provide movement

Movement often helps increase the level of alertness. Use movement when memorizing multiplication tables or spelling words. Break homework into 10-15 minute segments interspersed with activities from **HEAVY JOBS** or movement such as:

- **Jumping rope**



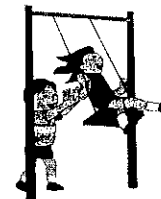
- **Bouncing on a trampoline**



- **Rocking in a rocking chair**



- **Swinging**



## Step 4: Provide dynamic sitting

Dynamic sitting is often best for the body according to ergonomic standards.



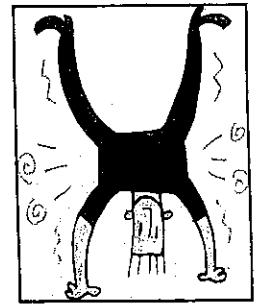
See **Can't Sit Still** for details

# Can't Sit Still

## PROBLEMS:

My child...

- slumps in her seat and lies on the table
- always seems to be wiggly and squirming when she is supposed to sit still
- constantly gets up out of her chair.



## GOALS:

- Detect your child's unique sensory preferences before and during 'sitting' activities
- Discover how movement may prepare your child for sitting
- Improve posture with dynamic sitting during eating and tabletop activities.



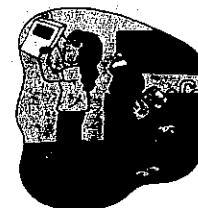
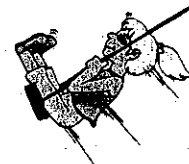
## SOLUTIONS:

### Step 1: Prior to quiet sitting

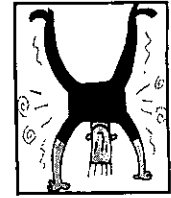
Children need good nutrition from food, and they also need sensory experiences for their body and brain. If your child has difficulty sitting still, she may need more movement experiences throughout the day or prior to sitting activities. As a parent, you can encourage and allow your child to move.

#### Some activities include ...

- up and down movements on a chair ball, trampoline or with a jump rope
- back and forth movements on a swing, in a rocking chair or stroller
- activities such as dancing, running, jumping, sliding, rolling
- helping with chores. See **HEAVY JOBS** for ideas.



# Can't Sit Still



## Step 2: During quiet sitting in a typical chair

If your child tends to wiggle or squirm in her seat, you may need to use a sensory strategy. Firm pressure touch (like a hug) tends to calm and quiet the body.



### Some strategies include ...

- wearing a heavy coat, weighted vest, or Bear Hug
- putting something on her lap (book bag, lap tray, heavy pillow)
- performing a heavy job intermittently throughout the activity.  
See **HEAVY JOBS**.



For additional activities, think about the...

### 7 categories

Hearing Seeing Touching Moving Smelling Muscles Mouth

For example:



A mother needs her small child to sit still in the grocery cart. She gives her child a box of raisins to eat while they shop. As you can see, several of the sensory categories listed above are involved. The box of raisins (which provides seeing, touching, smelling and mouth **tools**) helps her to sit still without becoming wiggly or fussy.

## Step 3: During quiet sitting on an unstable surface

Dynamic or active sitting on an unstable surface can provide your child with the little bit of additional movement she may need to maintain attention.

### Dynamic sitting prevents ergonomic casualties by ...

- challenging and supporting the spinal muscles of the back
- facilitating and training the body in an upright posture
- preventing uneven pressure on vertebral discs
- preventing constant one-sided strain
- promoting flexibility of the spine, joints and ligaments
- enhancing balance
- encouraging health and, over time, preventing postural deconditioning and back pain.

### Other dynamic sitting alternatives include ...

'T' stools, wedges and inflated disks. Each item varies in the type of input it provides. Together with your child, find which works **best for her**.

see The Ball Chair  
page in the  
**Tool Chest™** handbook

**The Ball Chair**

**OBJECTIVE**  
To help your child sit upright and help you sit up straight. It can also help strengthen the back.

**TO MAKE**

- It is best to have both feet flat. They are easier to carry and they stay in place when the child is sitting on the ball.
- Place the ball on the floor and sit on it.
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**SAFETY**

- Use only a ball that is safe for sitting.
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**THE BALL CHAIR INFORMATION**

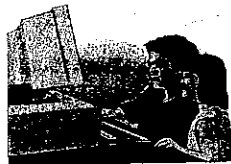
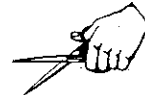
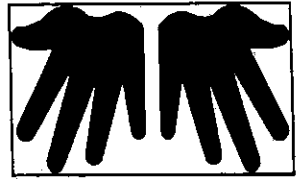
- The ball chair is made of a ball.
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# Scissors, Pencils & Computers

## PROBLEMS:

My child...

- holds the pencil with an awkward grasp
- complains that his hands hurt when writing
- does not use scissors accurately
- complains of headaches and back pain when using the computer
- engages in computer games for long periods of time.



## GOALS:

- Work as a team to help your child enjoy developing and improving hand skills.
- Teach your family ergonomically sound positioning and safe work habits at the computer. Researchers are finding that children as young as 11 and 12 are at risk of developing repetitive-strain injury, thanks to an increase in computer use and poor ergonomics.

## SOLUTIONS:

### *Step 1: Warm Up!*

It may help to 'warm up' the muscles of the hands, arms and shoulders before doing any writing or cutting activities. Do weight-bearing activities such as: push-ups (on the floor or against a wall) and animal walks (on hands and knees). Warm up the hands and fingers with clay, thera-putty or squeeze balls.



### **A great activity alone (or with a group) for grip strength:**

Have your child roll out 1 part blue Crayola Magic Model® compound with three parts yellow. Then the magic begins. Squeeze forever and a day and you get wonderful marbled feedback, as the yellow and blue make green. Encourage your child to make letters out of his clay and really keep playing with it because once he rolls it out with a small rolling pin that's the end of touching it. Roll the clay out and use a shamrock cookie cutter. The clay dries fairly quickly. On the BACK he can write his initials very LIGHTLY. If your child uses heavy pressure he will get immediate feedback if this is not done correctly. Put a magnet on the back and you have one refrigerator magnet coming right up. Your child may want to put his name on the front after MUCH practice concerning space and pressure. He can decorate the edges with small holes all the way around, using a paper clip for the holes.

Note: This activity was generously provided by Christine Rockett, OTR/L

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# Scissors, Pencils & Computers



## Step 2: Do It Right!



A younger child's little hands may not be ready for fine motor writing skills. Encourage 'hand games' involving pinching, pulling, squeezing and ripping (see Hand Games page in the *Tool Chest™* handbook). Using vertical surfaces to make shapes, scribbles, and upright wiggles is a great way to prepare young arms, wrists, hands and fingers BEFORE introducing the pencil. Use a dry erase board or tack up a large sheet of poster paper. Remember, creativity is the key!



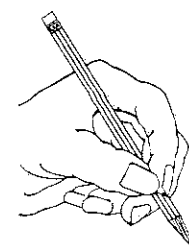
## Step 3: Hold It!

The 'correct' way to hold a pencil is with a tripod (three finger) grasp (see Pencil Holding in the *Tool Chest™* handbook). Various types of grips are available and may help teach young children to hold a pencil correctly. However, an older child may have developed a habit of holding a pencil a different way. If your child struggles with handwriting, speak with the occupational therapist. Various types of writing utensils are available. It may be necessary to limit the amount of handwriting with the use of a word processor, computer or tape recorder. This can help him feel good about himself without the added stress and time involved with handwriting.



## Step 4: Get With The Program!

Just as there are different learning styles, there are many ways to learn how to write. Children who experience handwriting difficulties will often succeed with a multi-sensory approach. There are many great handwriting programs that integrate the senses of movement, muscles, touch, hearing and seeing. See Resources for a list of handwriting programs. Collaborate with your child's occupational therapist and teacher to find the one that works for you at home and at school.



# Scissors, Pencils & Computers



## Step 5: The Right Fit!

Repetitive strain injury (RSI) may result from improper positioning at the computer workstation. Injury to the back, neck and even carpal tunnel syndrome may result from improper positioning.

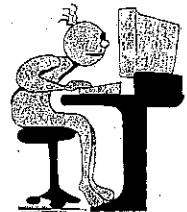


Teach your child to watch for the following RSI warning signs:

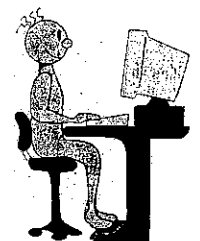
- Rubbing the forearm, elbow, wrist, or neck
- Trouble picking things up or frequently dropping things
- Complaining of numbness or tingling

Children should not sit hunched over the keyboard with shoulders forward. Make sure your child is able to sit up straight with the back supported, feet flat on the floor, not dangling or wrapped around the chair. An adjustable chair and a footstool may be a simple solution. The computer workstation should have an adjustable keyboard to fit the child. The mouse needs to be held in a relaxed and comfortable manner. The monitor should be placed at eye level and arm's distance away. Enforce a 30-minute rule when your child works with the computer. As a reminder, monitoring software packages are available that note how long they've been using the computer and suggest exercises for different muscles.

incorrect



correct



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# Seeing

## PROBLEMS:

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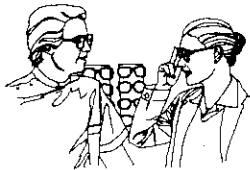
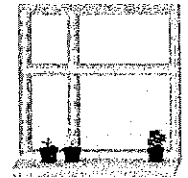
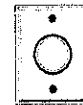
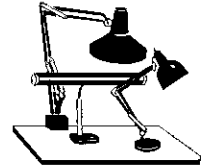
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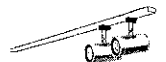
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- having bright colors and focused lights on objects for children who may need heightened alertness
- supporting the need for flexibility from day to day, from room to room, and from activity to activity.



# PLAYGROUNDS AND PARKS

## PROBLEMS:

My child...

- has poor motor coordination
- is afraid on playground equipment
- becomes over-stimulated and stressed
- gets into trouble on the playground at school
- is often kept in from recess because he doesn't get his work done.



## GOALS:

- Provide play time both at home and at school to improve attention, focus, coordination and interpersonal social skills.
- Help your child meet his specific sensory challenges when he is on the playground.
- Support your community and school in making playgrounds and outdoor play equipment accessible and safe for all children.

## SOLUTIONS:

### STEP 1: PROVIDE YOUR CHILD WITH ACCESS TO A 'KID POWER' AREA

Animal experts always include special play areas for their animals. They recognize the relationship between healthy development and daily opportunities for play, climbing and movement.

**Our children also need to play and move!**

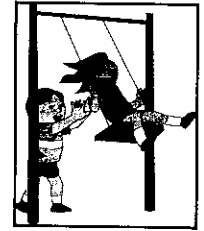
**Parks, playgrounds, and designated spaces in homes and classrooms must ...**

- be **SAFE** (when indoors, totally covered with mats)
- include gravitational challenges while being **SAFE**
- encourage **SAFE** climbing, pulling, pushing, jumping, sliding, rolling, lifting, stretching and opportunities for a wide range of movements.



Special thanks to Patty Oetter, OTR for introducing the term 'Kid Power' based on J. C. Pierce's *The Magic Child* published in 1977.

# PLAYGROUNDS AND PARKS



## STEP 2: OBSERVE YOUR CHILD IN YOUR BACKYARD, ON THE PLAYGROUND OR AT YOUR LOCAL PARK

How are the activities he chooses meeting his sensory needs?  
You might see that ...

- the rhythmic motion of swinging is calming and organizing
- movement helps your child perk up and pay attention
- after plenty of muscle work, your child is ready to focus, and his ability to concentrate has improved.



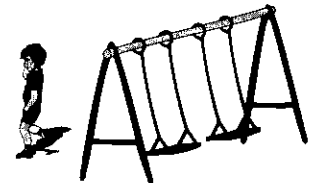
What situations cause your child to feel uncomfortable?  
If you see that he ...

- has preferences for only certain types of equipment
- avoids certain types of movement and equipment
- dislikes the feel of the sand
- often gets into trouble on the playground
- is always alone, on the perimeter
- often chooses to stay in from recess.



Speak to an expert in sensory integration regarding the possibility that ...

- avoidance of heights or certain kinds of movement may indicate a problem with the movement/balance (vestibular) sense
- difficulty with coordination such as pumping a swing, may indicate poor motor planning or dyspraxia
- discomfort with touch from others and/or the feel of the sand may indicate touch defensiveness
- difficulty knowing his own strength and coming across as a 'bully' may indicate poor feedback from his muscle (proprioceptive) sense.



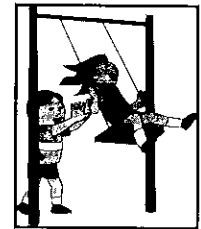
## STEP 3: MEET WITH YOUR COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC PARK ADMINISTRATORS TO ...

- improve the physical fitness and social well being of all families in the community
- learn about SAFETY standards on the playground
- redesign equipment, surfacing and layout.



For more info see The Consumer Federation Of America (CFA) "Parent Checklist: How Safe is Our Local Playground?" Appendix C to the June 2000 Playing It Safe report, found at [www.consumerfed.org](http://www.consumerfed.org)

# PLAYGROUNDS AND PARKS



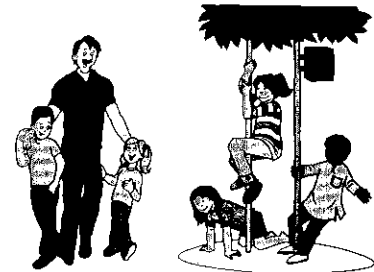
## STEP 4: COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, TEACHER, PLAYGROUND AIDE AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST TO HELP MAKE PLAYGROUND TIME SENSORY-SAFE FOR YOUR CHILD

### Tips include:

- Teach playground skills to your child. Bring him to the playground after school and on weekends to feel more comfortable on various types of equipment
- Invite a friend to play with your child on the playground
- Volunteer to help during recess at school
- With school staff, organize peer buddy groups to help your child and others on the playground
- Together with the school staff designate an adult to teach playground skills to your child and a smaller group of children. Give children a choice between being with a large group or playing in a small group.

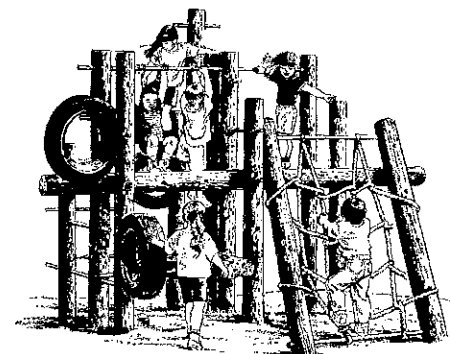


### RECESS



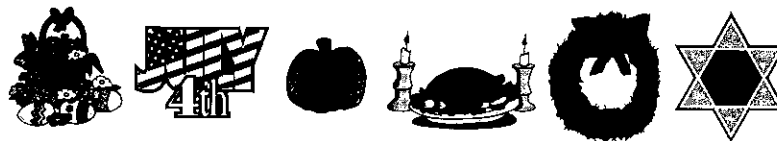
## STEP 5: MEET WITH SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

- Discuss the vital importance of daily playground time for all students to improve academic performance, attention and behavior in school.
- Ask who will do better on state testing ... the child who spent 30 minutes playing, climbing and swinging on the playground, or the child kept inside?
- Present evidence supporting use of playground equipment to increase the muscle control children need for fine motor coordination and handwriting skills. The stability needed for handwriting skills improves when children use muscles of the shoulders and upper back during climbing and muscles of the wrist and hand during crawling activities.
- Acknowledge their participation in promoting long-term physical fitness for all students.
- Highlight the importance of decreasing stress and enhancing emotional well-being by developing healthy interpersonal social skills in unstructured play situations.





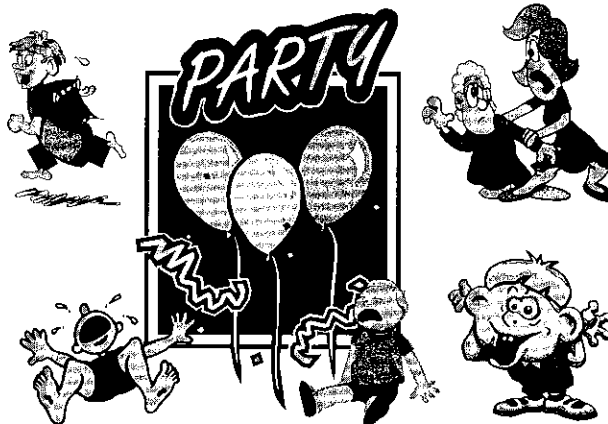
# Holiday Helpers



## PROBLEMS:

My child...

- becomes overexcited and out of control during the holidays
- tends to have tantrums at loud parties or crowded shopping malls
- tends to cry or 'act out' when leaving a fun place.



## GOALS:

- Plan a happy holiday with sensory strategies that are effective
- Make your holidays less stressful and more enjoyable for you and your family
- Balance consistency with flexibility.

**Remember: They are children!**

## SOLUTIONS:

**Step 1: Invite your child to help with holiday preparations. Focus on your child's sensory preference so you can design or 'load the activity' with that specific sensory input. The following can help your child become more focused:**

- Knead and roll cookie dough
- Help with chores (sweeping, washing windows)
- Carry heavy packages in a busy shopping mall
- Take a break during a busy day of shopping and go to the park or playground.





# Holiday Helpers



**Step 2: Help your child be prepared for holiday events. Keep to your regular schedule and routine when possible. Too many changes can be stressful.**

## Before a big event:

- Let her know the schedule ahead of time
- Prepare your child by explaining the rules, times, and what to expect. For example, if having to sit and listen during a program, tell your child she will have to sit for ..... (how many minutes?)
- Write a Social Story together. See **Social Stories** for outline.
- If you plan something exciting at night, use calming strategies during the day. This helps your child rest and stay centered before the event.
- Wrap your child (with firm pressure) in a soft cozy quilt and **role play** together what she will experience and what to expect at the event.



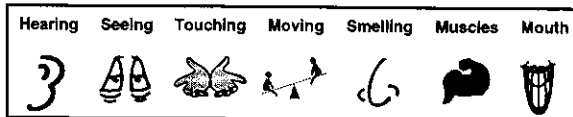
## During an event:

- Holiday events tend to be very stimulating and your child can easily become stressed, overwhelmed and unable to cope. You may need to limit the amount of time at the party.
- Make sure your child has a **quiet place** to go to during a loud or stimulating party.
- Encourage her to take a break before becoming over-stimulated.
- Play the Hot Dog game. Your child lies across a blanket, is being rolled into it, and ends up inside with the arms and head outside. Or use a sleeping bag. Pressure touch and neutral warmth (the body's heat retained) can be calming.



See *Discovering Your Child's Sensory Needs*, page #6

## Remember the 7 CATEGORIES



- For example; sensory **tools** such as sunglasses, a hat, or ear muffs may help.
- Give her **time to prepare to leave** a fun place. This transition can be difficult! Schedule some time to calm down.
- Make sure the last activity is one that is calming (giving a long hug to a favorite relative.)



## After an event:

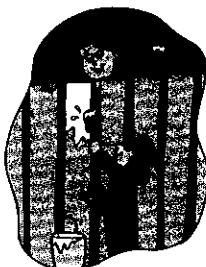
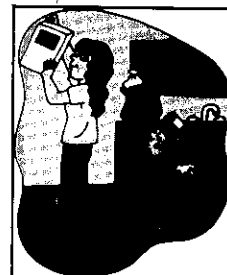
Use calming and routine after returning home from an event to help your child calm down. Choose activities from **HEAVY JOBS** which she enjoys.

# HEAVY JOBS

What are **HEAVY JOBS** and what do they do?

Activities that provide heavy muscle work are frequently used to develop stability for coordination **and** to promote attention, focus and calmness.

Although these are often labeled 'heavy work' activities, we prefer to call them 'heavy jobs.' Children often appear to be more motivated to do 'jobs' than they are to do 'work.'



## GOALS:

- Integrate the 'just right' amount of heavy muscle work activities throughout your child's day to meet his unique sensory needs
- Provide your child with opportunities to safely seek and obtain the heavy muscle work he needs through outdoor play and indoor games
- Select helpful chores that use heavy muscle work activities, to increase focus and improve social skills. Chose heavy jobs he *likes* to do.

## SOLUTIONS:

Together with your child and family, choose activities which work for you outdoors, indoors, during playtime, work time, mealtime, bath time and bedtime.

You may find it helpful to make a list from the following pages and post it on your refrigerator.

### Work List

Carry the laundry basket to your room

Help put the groceries away

### Play List

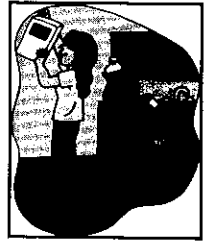
Carry the box of toys to your wagon

Pull your wagon with the toys to the park

Climb on the monkey bars

Dig in the sandbox with a friend

# HEAVY JOBS



## JOBS & CHORES ... Inside:

Put groceries away. Include some low shelves where he needs to be on his hands and knees



Take the cushions off the sofas, vacuum under them, then put them back



Mop or sweep the kitchen floor

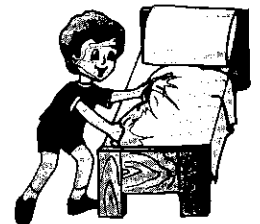
Scrub rough surfaces with a brush



Help dust the furniture

Clean the windows or the front of appliances (spray bottles are great for hand muscles!)

Carry the laundry basket



Change the sheets on the bed, then toss the linens down the stairs

Rearrange the bedroom furniture.

\*\*\*\*\*

## JOBS & CHORES ... Outside:

Sweep the porch or driveway



Do yard work (rake leaves, mow the lawn)



Shovel sand into a wheelbarrow, wheel the wheelbarrow to a spot, dump out sand and use a rake to level it out (functional for filling in low spots in backyard)

Carry buckets to water flowers, plants, trees



Recycle (carry a box of cans or newspapers)



Pull a heavy trashcan

Stack the patio chairs



Wash the car



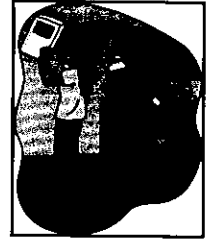
Bathe the dog

Perform wood projects requiring sanding and hammering.





# HEAVY JOBS



## PLAY TIME ... Inside:

Push or pull a box with toys or a few books in it

Play 'cars' under the kitchen table where your child is on hands and knees pushing the car with one hand while weight bearing on the other hand

Play 'row, row, row your boat' both sitting on the floor, pushing and pulling each other

Play 'magic carpet' (pull someone on a sheet, blanket or small rug)

Bounce on a mini trampoline or on a 'chair ball' while holding its legs

Climb on pillows, hide under them, jump and 'crash' into them, pull them up the stairs

Play 'pillow fight'

Fall into a beanbag chair

Do the army crawl and animal walks (crab walk, bear walk)

Play 'sandwich games' where your child places you between beanbags, sofa cushions, mattresses and applies light pressure to top layer

Be a pizza and have your child slowly roll a ball over you, applying pressure.

See Resources for Pete's A Pizza book

\*\*\*\*\*

## PLAY TIME ... Outside:

Fill up big toy trucks with heavy blocks, push with both hands to knock things down

Play in a sandbox with damp heavy sand

Color a 'rainbow' with large paper or with sidewalk chalk while your child is on his hands and knees

Jump over or climb inside inner tubes

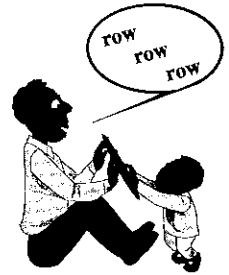
Play catch with a heavy ball

Play 'tug of war' with a jump rope

Roll or sled down a hill

Swing from the monkey bars and climb on playground equipment

Participate in activities such as gymnastics, horseback riding, karate, pulling self up climbing walls.



**Remember FUN and SUCCESS are key.**

# HEAVY JOBS



## TRANSITIONS:

Push heavy doors using both hands



Carry groceries into the house



When traveling, let your child pull his own suitcase on wheels.

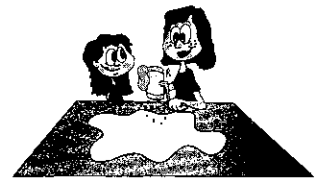
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## MEAL TIME:

Mix and knead cookie dough



Help cook with an onion chopper  
(or other simple and safe kitchen utensils)



Push or pull chairs in/out from the table

Wipe the table after dinner with a large sponge and use hand muscles to squeeze

Sip applesauce or thick milkshake through a straw.



\*\*\*\*\*

## HOMEWORK TIME:

Chew gum, eat chewy foods or crunchy foods, or sip water from a water bottle with a thin straw

Do chair push ups (see Chair Push-Ups in the *Tool Chest™* handbook)



Say 'let's pretend to make the room bigger' and push against the walls.



\*\*\*\*\*

## BATH TIME:

After a bath, rub your child briskly with a large heavy towel, firmly squeezing his muscles. He can help fold the towel when done.



\*\*\*\*\*

## BED TIME:

Help fold a heavy quilt



Wear tight flannel or soft snug pajamas

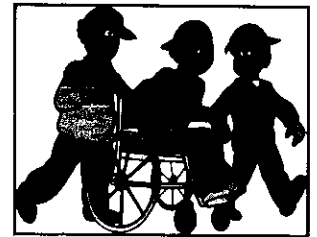
Go 'camping' with a heavy blanket pulled across a few chairs. Your child can help set up and take down the blanket



Change the sheets on the bed.

Note: These activities were adapted from a list generously provided and compiled by Elizabeth Haber, MS, OTR/L and Deanna Iris Sava, MS, OTR/L. For additional lists contact by email eahaber@aol.com or deannasava11@msn.com

# Making Friends



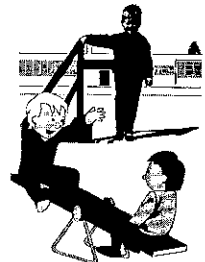
## PROBLEMS:

My child...

- plays too rough with other children
- becomes upset when other children touch him
- prefers to watch others play.



## RECESS



## GOALS:

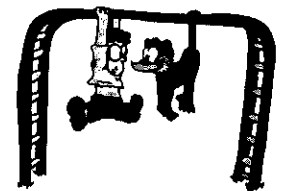
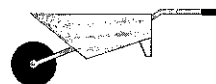
- Utilize sensory strategies to prepare your child for successful play
- Teach your child that everyone has unique sensory needs
- Help your child develop important friendships while enjoying social and sensory reciprocity.

## SOLUTIONS:

**Step 1: Observe your child in various play situations. Does he push or hit others? Bang or throw toys? Purposely fall to the floor or 'jump' on others?**

- Some children whose play is too rough may not 'know their own strength.' They don't realize that others can be hurt. They don't have the intention of hurting others. Instead, they appear to have a high neurological threshold for certain kinds of pain. They may even have difficulty empathizing with the pain of others.
- Your child's behavior may indicate at times that he is a *sensory seeker*. He may need additional sensory input through his muscle-tendon-joint (proprioceptive) system to feel his best. Provide activities that require heavy muscle work prior to or during play time, including:

- The wheelbarrow walk with a friend
- Climbing the monkey bars or pulling up the slide (backwards)
- Pushing a friend or heavy items in a wagon
- Taking short breaks and jumping on a trampoline or using a jump rope together intermittently during a quiet activity such as a board game or a card game.



# Making Friends



**Step 2: Observe your child during playgroups. Is he more sensitive or 'touch defensive' than his peers to certain kinds of touch? Does he withdraw or lash out? Does he avoid activities such as playing in sand, with glue or finger-paint?**

- Your child's behavior may indicate at times that he is a **sensory avoider**. Acknowledge that the discomfort he feels is real for him. Never force him to participate. Unexpected touch can be very stressful. Encourage him to communicate when he does not want to touch or be touched and when he needs a hug or a break from the activity. Give praise for his accomplishments.
- You can help your child and his sensory system be prepared for 'touching' activities.
  - Use firm touch pressure before or during the activity. Ask for permission and let him know what you are going to do. Then give a firm hug or push slowly and firmly straight down on top of the shoulders.
  - Describe the activity and tell him what sensations may be involved (slimy, sticky, bumpy, tickly).
  - Allow him to wear clothing he prefers. These may be long sleeves or clothes that are soft and snug. See Resources page for information on clothing.



**Step 3: Observe your child's preferences. Rather than play with his peers, does he choose to watch others or play alone? Does he tend to seek interaction with a younger child or an adult?**

When a child has difficulty organizing and making sense with sensations, peers with sophisticated skills in social interaction can be threatening. Younger children are more controllable and adults are more tolerant and predictable. They are more 'sensory safe.'

- Tailor your child's experiences to his unique qualities. The right experiences will help your child realize his potential. By nurturing your child's nature, he can develop the capacity to trust, empathize and relate to others. You can tailor your interactions to his individual strengths and honor his individual differences by:
  - Realizing that some children may always feel more comfortable with friends who are older or younger.
  - Having a party 'just because' and invite one or two other children. When your child is ready, expand the group to 5 or more.
  - Working with your school to develop a circle of friends who will be loyal and supportive of your child throughout his school career.
  - Encouraging your child to become a peer tutor to a younger child (helping to read, helping to play on the playground or becoming a 'buddy' helper during PE time).
  - Honoring your child's need for 'alone time' to unwind, to read or to play.

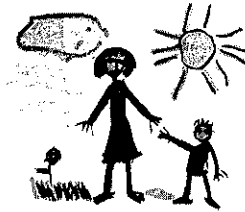


# Making Friends



**Step 4: Talk about friendship with your child.**  
**Ask him 'what is a friend?'**

Benjamin (age 4) says:  
"a friend is someone who likes you...  
someone who takes care of you."



Corinne (age 7) says:  
"a friend is someone you can trust...  
someone who likes to do the same stuff I like to do."



Nicholas (age 13) says:  
"a friend is someone who respects you for who you are...  
someone you enjoy being around."



Christopher (age 15) says:  
"a friend is someone who will help you in time of need...  
someone you can talk to...  
someone that can give you confidence."



\*\*\*\*\*

Play *The Basics of Friendship* song from the *Songames* audiotape. It encourages an awareness of what it takes to be a friend, to make and to keep friendships.



Sing along with the words below ...

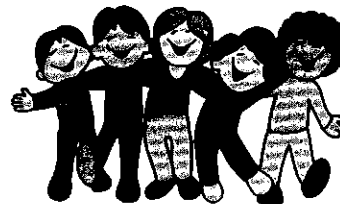
Trust each other. Help each other. Play together. Stay loyal too.  
Share with each other. Do fun things together.  
A friend's someone you can talk to, who will listen to you. (chorus twice)



To have a friend is to be a friend. To have a friend is to be a friend.  
Simple are the basic ways that we all make friends. (repeat)

(repeat chorus)

Make new friends, but keep the old.  
One is silver and the other's gold.  
(Sung in a round and repeated until song closes)



The Basics of Friendship song from Songames  
Copyright 2001 Sensory Resources LLC. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

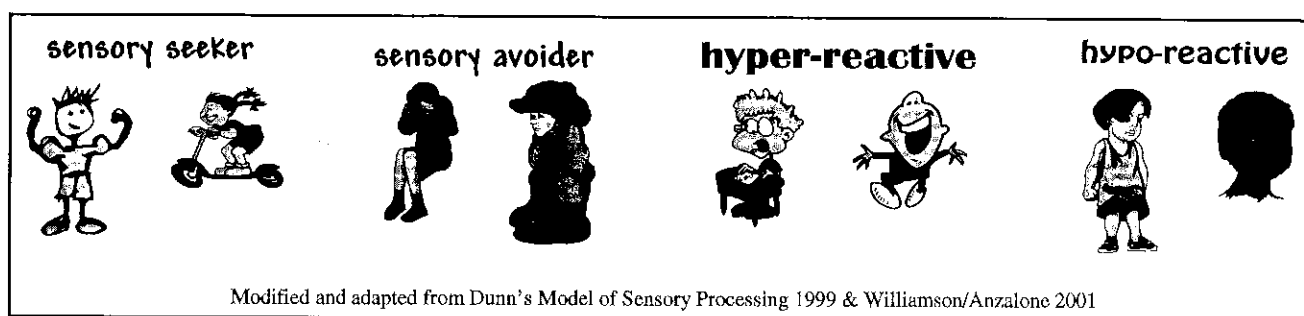
See Resources for information on Songames

# Challenging Behaviors

## Strategies for Analyzing and Remediating

By Lorna Jean King, OTR/L, FAOTA

**Behavior is communication, which the child cannot put into words.  
A child's challenging behavior is a problem to an adult  
... to a child it is a solution.**



If withdrawing and sulking, or hitting and kicking are the only patterns in your child's repertoire of reactions, scolding or punishing is not going to prevent the behavior from happening again. Instead, it is up to us as adults to help our children find better solutions and avoid situations, which trigger the behaviors. If neurodevelopment is immature (which is frequently the case), parents and teachers can use the activities in this handbook to help their children's nervous system mature.

One of the first steps is to find out what your child perceives as the problem. Often he is not able to put into words, especially if his "challenging behavior" is a reflex reaction to something his nervous system senses as dangerous or uncomfortable. This is often the case with the child who is hyperactive or has attention deficits. He over-responds to all kinds of stimuli, much of it irrelevant from the adult's point of view. He may say "I'm sorry," but unless someone figures out what is going on, it will happen again and again. Soon adults may label the child "bad," and the child also labels himself a failure, and knows that he is a *disappointment* to his parents and teachers. Complicate this with learning problems or social failures with peers, and the scene is set for an ongoing cycle of failure and unhappiness for both adults and children.

While the challenging behaviors of children with hyperactivity or attention deficit disorders affect a large number of families, even more severe problems are faced by the parents and teachers of children with autism or pervasive developmental disorders. Often there are self-stimulating or self-abusive patterns which pose severe threats to the child's health and well-being as well as his ability to learn. Following are some strategies for analyzing and remediating self-stimulating and self-abusive behaviors.

# Challenging Behaviors



It is best to deal with only one behavior at a time. Select the self-stimulating or self-abusive behavior that is most unacceptable. Then be a **detective** and analyze when the behavior occurs with the following questions:

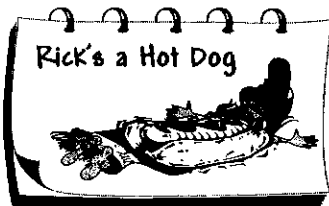
- Are the expectations realistic? For example, 3 minutes of attention per year of age has been used as a rule of thumb for typical children. Therefore expecting a pre-schooler to stay put during a 30-minute circle time can produce challenging behaviors.
- What were the sensory contributions to the behavior?
- Was there a sudden or unexpected change in the activity or environment?
- Was your child expecting something that didn't happen?
- Was your child reacting to the materials or nature of the activity?
- Does the behavior occur when the room is noisy or crowded?
- Does the behavior occur with some family members and not with others?
- Does the behavior occur when your child is not occupied?
- Have there been changes at home or school?

If there is a pattern to the occurrence of the behavior, ask yourself "what is my child's behavior trying to tell me?" Maybe he wants to express "I'm tired, I need more sensory input, I don't want to do this, that hurts, I don't understand, I'm bored, I'm afraid, I'm too excited, pay attention to me, stop that noise, etc."

Although not all challenging behaviors have a sensory basis (allergies are often contributors), **self-abusive behaviors are almost always in response to stress**. It may be difficult to figure out what elements of the situation are stressful to your child, but noise and too many people in close proximity are almost always stressful. Unstructured environments and excessive waiting can also promote challenging behaviors. Self-stimulating behavior usually occurs when children are not engaged in purposeful activity. It can be likened to the "doodling" or finger tapping that most of us do when we are bored.

The nature of the self-stimulating or self-abusive behavior can give you clues to the kinds of sensory input or **tools** your child may be needing to help calm and organize his brain. For example, head or hand or foot banging may indicate a need for more "pressure touch" input. Try the Bear Hug (See Resources for additional information). Socially acceptable chewing or sucking activities may decrease biting or chewing on unacceptable substances. Chewing and sucking are universally calming, sedating activities.

When you think you have figured out the communication and the provoking circumstance, test your theory by changing the provoking situation and/or responding to the communication in a way that helps your child. If this doesn't work, try another possibility. Work together with your family members and school team to plan the words of Angela Sallerson, founder of Occupational Therapy of Rochester, NY, "I have found that the positive approach works."



# Social Stories

An introduction by Judith Schoonover, OTR/L

A Social Story can assist with reinforcing the **tool** choices your child makes such as one or more of the activities described in this handbook. The concept of Social Stories was developed by Carol Gray.\* Social Stories are visually presented personalized stories that address specific circumstances which may prove challenging. Social Stories 'walk' a child through a named situation. They provide reassuring, predictable texts. They can also be a proactive way of teaching about the transitions or schedule changes that many children with sensory processing dysfunction find distressing.

When a child participates in the creation of a Social Story, using his or her own words or input, there is a sense of 'ownership' of the story or roadmap, which will likely increase its effectiveness. A child does not have to have the ability to read to benefit from a Social Story, however, the story should be written at the child's level of understanding. Keep the story short and to the point. Anyone can write a Social Story and suggested guidelines are included in Carol Gray's formulas.

"No" messages, such as "no hitting, no biting, no pushing, etc." can be misinterpreted by the child who may not hear or perceive the concept of 'no', or only processes the last word spoken. It is suggested that rather than state the behavior using a negative, simply describe the behavior the child displays, make a statement of how it may be perceived by others, and suggest acceptable alternatives. An effective Social Story often ends with an affirmative statement ('When I choose to be held in a sandwich hug instead of hitting, I feel proud of myself and I am in charge of how I behave.')

Social Stories should be shared with those involved with the situation the story relates to. The story may also help educate those less familiar with what the child's behavior is indicating... the child is not being deliberately naughty, he is reacting reflexively to something his nervous system senses as uncomfortable. If the child is able to participate in the development of the Social Story, he or she may also want to chose or create pictures to go along with the story. Visuals often help the processing of information and reinforce what is seen and heard.

For example, if a social story was created to go along with an activity from *Holiday Helpers* in this handbook, the graphic from the Hot Dog game could be used to cue the child. (Refer to pages #6 and #25)



Below is an example of a Social Story outline for choosing calming activities before saying goodbye.

I like the holidays.

Sometimes holiday times make me feel a little wild.

Having to say goodbye makes me act even wilder.

My \_\_\_\_\_ (parents, siblings, friends, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_ do not like it when I get so wild when having to leave.

It looks funny to my friends.

It makes me feel out of control.

I can get calm before saying goodbye.

I can choose to \_\_\_\_\_ (take a break, go to a quiet place, play the 'Hot Dog' game, etc.)

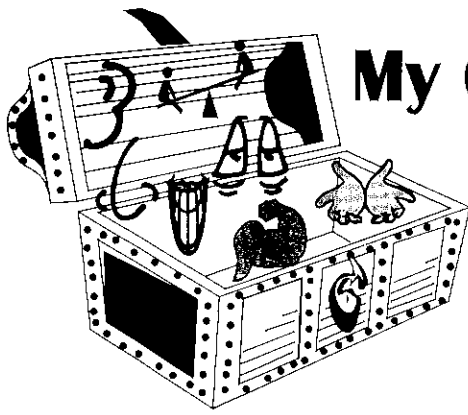
My \_\_\_\_\_ (parents, siblings, friends, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_ are happy when I make a good choice.

Calming activities make me feel good and proud of my behavior.



\*Books by Carol Gray include *The New Social Story Book*, *Comic Strip Conversations*, and *Taming the Recess Jungle*. For more information on Social Stories go to [www.thegraycenter.org](http://www.thegraycenter.org)





# My Child's Tool Chest

## A Sensory List for Your Child

Complete this list with your child. This activity will help you understand your child's sensory needs. They may be different from your sensory needs. Become detectives together. Create sensory-safe environments and activities to make your lives **happier** and successful.

### Tools which help me:

#### When Getting Ready to ...

wake up \_\_\_\_\_ eat breakfast \_\_\_\_\_  
get dressed \_\_\_\_\_ ride the school bus \_\_\_\_\_  
do my work \_\_\_\_\_ go to bed \_\_\_\_\_

#### In The Homework Place to ...

set up my space \_\_\_\_\_ be comfortable \_\_\_\_\_  
make studying fun \_\_\_\_\_ take breaks \_\_\_\_\_

#### When I Can't Sit Still to ...

make sitting fun \_\_\_\_\_ focus \_\_\_\_\_  
protect my back \_\_\_\_\_ have better posture \_\_\_\_\_

#### With Scissors, Pencils & Computers to ...

warm up my hands and fingers \_\_\_\_\_  
make my arms and wrists strong for writing \_\_\_\_\_  
hold my pencil correctly \_\_\_\_\_  
make writing fun \_\_\_\_\_  
protect my body when I work at the computer \_\_\_\_\_

#### With Seeing by ...

protecting my eyes \_\_\_\_\_ helping me focus on my work \_\_\_\_\_  
developing my eye muscles for reading \_\_\_\_\_  
developing my eye-hand-body coordination for sports \_\_\_\_\_

#### On Playgrounds to ...

be safe \_\_\_\_\_ be successful on the equipment \_\_\_\_\_  
have fun at recess \_\_\_\_\_

#### During the Holidays to ...

participate with the preparations \_\_\_\_\_  
have fun \_\_\_\_\_ stay calm when the times get wild \_\_\_\_\_

#### Choose Heavy Jobs for ...

playtime games and helpful chores that make me feel good \_\_\_\_\_  
inside \_\_\_\_\_ outside \_\_\_\_\_

#### To Make Friends by ...

getting ready to play with a friend \_\_\_\_\_  
playing with a friend \_\_\_\_\_  
being a friend \_\_\_\_\_

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## Web Sites/List Servs

A TEACHABOUT... Henry OT Services links to **sensory integration** related sites: [www.ateachabout.com](http://www.ateachabout.com)

Autism Today (online source for latest news on Autism): [www.autismtoday.com](http://www.autismtoday.com)

Brain Gym: [www.iamthechild.com](http://www.iamthechild.com)

Communities Creating Circles of Peace: [www.ipj-ppj.org](http://www.ipj-ppj.org)

Davidson Institute- Supporting Profoundly Gifted Young People: [www.davidsoninstitute.org](http://www.davidsoninstitute.org)

Ergonomics: [www.officesafe.net](http://www.officesafe.net)

Family Education Network (Includes a Homework Center): [www.fen.com](http://www.fen.com)

Gluten-free diets: [www.gfcfdiet.com](http://www.gfcfdiet.com)

IDEA Partnerships (service providers, families, advocates, administrators and policy makers): [www.ideapractices.org](http://www.ideapractices.org)

Interdisciplinary Council on Developmental & Learning Disorders (ICDL): [www.icdl.com](http://www.icdl.com)

Irlen Institute and colored overlays: [www.Irlen.com](http://www.Irlen.com)

Kidlink (empowering kids to build global networks of friends): [www.kidlink.org](http://www.kidlink.org)

LD (tips by R. Wanderman): [www.ldresources.com](http://www.ldresources.com)

New Developments Newsletter (P. Lemer): [www.devdelay.org](http://www.devdelay.org)

Pediatric OT list serv: [ot-peds@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ot-peds@yahoogroups.com)

Pen pals for children with disabilities: [www.ablelink.org](http://www.ablelink.org)

Play (International Association for the Child's Right to Play): [www.ipausa.org](http://www.ipausa.org)

Playgrounds: [www.boundlessplaygrounds.org](http://www.boundlessplaygrounds.org)

Ready Reader Newsletter (B. Hanschu): [www.atready.com](http://www.atready.com)

Sensory Integration Disorder Support List: [sid@yahoogroups.com](mailto:sid@yahoogroups.com)

Sensory Integration Disorder Support Site: [www.kid-power.com/sid.html](http://www.kid-power.com/sid.html)

Simplified Signing Systems: [www.simplifiedsigns.org](http://www.simplifiedsigns.org)

Social Stories (C. Gray): [www.thegraycenter.org](http://www.thegraycenter.org)

Teachers' Column in the Washington Post (E. Vuko): [www.teachersays.com](http://www.teachersays.com)

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA): [www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org)

# Resources

## More Tools for Making Sense with Sensations

- Backpack safety recommendations** (selecting, loading and wearing bookbags for school), developed in partnership with AOTA by K. Jacobs: available at [www.llbean.com](http://www.llbean.com) and click on Book Pack Guide.
- Bearhug** (vest worn to elicit calming by producing mild proprioception with pressure-touch), designed by D. Dickson: available at [www.southpawenterprises.com](http://www.southpawenterprises.com)
- Behavioral optometry and occupational therapy** (playful, practical activities for home and school to improve visual skills) *Seeing Clearly* booklet: available at [www.ateachabout.com](http://www.ateachabout.com)
- Clothing** (seam-free socks, lycra bike shorts and more): available at [www.sensorycomfort.com](http://www.sensorycomfort.com)
- Friendship song**, 'The Basics of Friendship' from *Songames For Sensory Integration*: available at [www.ateachabout.com](http://www.ateachabout.com)
- Pizza making...the sensory way...a child's picture book**, *Pete's A Pizza*: available at [www.ateachabout.com](http://www.ateachabout.com)
- School inservicing on sensory integration video** (for parents, administrators and teachers) *Tools For Teachers* by D. Henry: available at [www.ateachabout.com](http://www.ateachabout.com)
- Visual schedule** (reduces anxiety and promotes calmness during transition), designed by L. Bell: available at [www.ezbreez.com](http://www.ezbreez.com)

## More Information on Sensory Processing

- Dr. Lucy Jane Miller's upcoming book** written with a popular press reader in mind, about the trials and tribulations, as well as, the successes and joys that children with DSI and their families experience. L. J. Miller: *Sensational Children: Understanding Sensory Integration Dysfunction*. In process at time of printing.
- Information on Sensory Diet Applications and Environmental Modifications** (compiled via a cooperative effort of therapists, assistants, students and teachers led by V.L. Nackley). Published by The AOTA Inc. in the March 2001 issue, *Sensory Integration Special Interest Section Quarterly*, Volume 24, Number 1. Posted with permission on [www.ateachabout.com](http://www.ateachabout.com)
- Parent Support Group: DSI Parent Connections** (State by state Registry at [www.sinetwork.org](http://www.sinetwork.org)). Contact [Laurie@accessp.com](mailto:Laurie@accessp.com) for more information.
- Parents' video** (sensory processing differences and helpful strategies) *Roots to Wings* by J. Reisman: 1996, Therapy Skill Builders, San Antonio, TX.
- Sequel to *The Out of Sync Child***, C. Kranowitz: *The Out Of Sync Child Has Fun: 101 Activities to Enjoy at Home*. Perigee Books, New York, NY. In process at time of printing.
- Sound-based Technologies**, S. Frick and C. Hacker: *Listening With The Whole Body*. Vital Links, Madison, WI. In process at time of printing.

## Some Favorite Songs (For transitions and self-regulation)

- Alert Program with Songs for Self regulation** (includes "The Flea Market" and "Stop & Go" songs) M.S. Williams, S. Shellenberger and the Belle Curvians: available at [www.ateachabout.com](http://www.ateachabout.com)
- Songames For Sensory Integration** (includes "The Clothing Quiz," "The Waiting Game," "Makin Pizza" and "Dip Down" songs) A. Lande, B. Wiz and friends: available at [www.ateachabout.com](http://www.ateachabout.com)

## Some Pre-Writing and Handwriting Techniques

- Accommodations for handwriting**: [www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/writing/writing.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/writing/writing.html)
- Barchowsky's Fluent Hand**: [www.BFHhandwriting.com](http://www.BFHhandwriting.com)
- Big Strokes for Little Folks**, B.L. Rubell: [www.concentric.net/~paul1/bigstrokes.shtml/#Selections](http://www.concentric.net/~paul1/bigstrokes.shtml/#Selections)
- Calliobics: Handwriting Exercises to Music**: [www.calliobics.com](http://www.calliobics.com)
- FUNdamentals of Handwriting**, M. Cake: [MiriamOT13@aol.com](mailto:MiriamOT13@aol.com)
- Getting it Write**, L. Audette and A. Karson: [www.therapyshoppe.com](http://www.therapyshoppe.com)
- Give yourself a Hand**, J. Berry: [www.otideas.com](http://www.otideas.com)
- Handwriting Without Tears**, J. Olsen: [www.hwtears.com](http://www.hwtears.com)
- Loops and Groups**, M. Benbow: [www.advancerehab.org](http://www.advancerehab.org)
- My Learn to Draw and Print**, S. Wahl and S. Sutton: [www.parentbookstore.com](http://www.parentbookstore.com)
- The Getty-Dubay Italic Handwriting Series**, B. Getty and I. Dubay: [www.theraproducts.net](http://www.theraproducts.net)
- The Unifon Alphabet**: [www.unifon.org](http://www.unifon.org)
- Tool Chest: For Teachers, Parents and Students** handbook, D. Henry: [www.ateachabout.com](http://www.ateachabout.com)
- Tools For Students** video compliments the *Tool Chest* handbook, D. Henry: [www.ateachabout.com](http://www.ateachabout.com)
- TRICS for Written Communication**, S. Amundson: [www.alaska.net/~otkids/trics.html](http://www.alaska.net/~otkids/trics.html)
- Zaner-Bloser**: [www.zaner-bloser.com](http://www.zaner-bloser.com)