

SENSORY PLAY IDEAS

Vestibular (balance) activities

- Climbing (trees, playground, ropes)
- Swinging (net swing, tire swing, blanket, swing set in different positions such as on the stomach, sitting, or standing and the child should always be in control of the movement and lateral movement is preferred)
- Spinning (merry-go-round, swivel chair, net swing or sit-n-spin - again the child is in control and they should only be allowed to spin for a short period of time as this is typically “jazzing” to a child)
- Rolling (in a barrel, tire, blanket, across carpet or the grass)
- Rocking (rocking chair, rocking horse, therapy ball)
- Obstacle course
- Scooter board
- Jumping (trampoline, old mattress, HippityHop)
- Riding (wagon or bicycle)
- Dancing, especially to “stop and go” songs and songs with actions

Proprioceptive activities

- Sandwich/ burrito games (child is between two mats/ blankets and is squished)
- Wall pushes (push the wall with different body parts)
- Jumping, hopping, hopscotch
- Climbing/ crawling (boxes, pillows, beanbag pillows, tunnels, obstacle course)
- Pushing/ pulling games (wheelbarrow, tug-o-war, heavy carts)
- Wear a heavy backpack
- Wheelbarrow walking
- Catch games (use heavy balls)
- “Bumpity” horse (have child your legs and bounce them)
- Rope games (child holds rope and an adult pulls them on a scooter/ wagon)
- Child tries to roll on an adult
- Bear hugs
- Play wrestling (push against shoulders/back/hands/feet)
- Child lays on tummy on a ball and adult pushes gently at the hips and shoulders
- Crash games (old couch, old mattress, pile of pillows/blankets, foam crash pad)
- Chores (vacuum, dust, push/pull activities)
- Resistive games (Legos, pop-beads, Playdough)
- Hideouts (provide heavy blankets, pillows in a small place)

Tactile Activities

There are many things we can do to assist the tactile system. Light touch input alerts the nervous system and deep pressure input calms the nervous system. Some children are under aroused and need more alerting input balanced with calming and centering input. Other children are over aroused and need more calming and organizing input. As often as possible, do not “do to” a child and respect their physical boundaries. Always approach your child from the front and let them know you are going to be touching them.

Calming Activities

- Bear hug
- Back rub
- Piggy back ride
- Massage
- Wrap child in warm blanket, sleeping bag or sheet. Give your child a massage while they are wrapped up from head to toe
- Allow child to sleep in a sleeping bag with satin, silk etc.
- Weighted blankets

Alerting Activities

- Hide objects in different textures and “dig for treasure”
- Explore widely varied textures with hands and feet
- After a bath, vigorously rub child
- Pull child around while they lay on a blanket
- Allow child to sleep in a sleeping bag with terry cloth fabrics
- Encourage child to crawl and roll on carpet, grass, sand
- Play with bean bags of different textures

See also “Tactile Bins” Handout

SENSORY PLAY FOR INFANTS

1. Create sensory play bins that your child can reach into, or even sit inside of the box

- ◆ Yarn pom-poms
- ◆ Water of different temperatures and colors
- ◆ Koosh balls or balls with textures
- ◆ Rattles and teething rings with textures (we have some great catalogues)
- ◆ Sheets of shiny mylar paper
- ◆ Feather dusters (avoid touching the face)
- ◆ Sponges or net bath puffs
- ◆ Various fabrics (velvet, burlap, lace, satin, flannel) you could make a picture book
- ◆ Bath foams

2. Massage your child with lotions 1-2 times a day

3. Allow for plenty of movement experiences

- ◆ Baby swings
- ◆ Rocking chair
- ◆ Hold in arms and rock side to side, front to back, up and down
- ◆ Tummy time play

4. When your child is in distress you can lower your voices, lower the lights, swaddle in a blanket and/or rock your child