

Our brains constantly process and organise huge amounts of sensory information on a daily basis. Children who has experienced trauma, neglect or abuse in their pre-natal or early years may find it hard to process and organise all the sensory information the brain received. They may also be extra sensitive to some of these sensory experiences. At times this can lead to them feeling anxious and struggle to regulate their emotions.

Using sensory regulating activities on a daily basis can be helpful in helpful children remain calm, focussed, and regulated during the day and enable them to manage their day-to-day routine and transitions more effectively.

### **Joint Traction**

This relates to tension or pulling on the joint and develops self-body-awareness, special body awareness, and self-regulation. It can be calming, organising, and regulating for the brain.

- Climb/hang from a tree or monkey bar
- Hang from bar by knees
- Drape backwards over a therapy/large ball/space hopper with arms over head
- Hang over side of bed
- Stretching activities/yoga
- Pulling heavy items
- Carry heavy objects

### **Joint Compression**

- Jumping, running, hopping, skipping
- Wheelbarrow walking
- Yoga poses
- Trampoline
- Handstands/cartwheels
- Bike riding
- Pushing heavy things (boxes, shopping trolley, Hoover)
- Crab walking

### **Proprioception**

This is often referred to as heavy/hard work. Proprioception receptors are located in joints, muscles, and tendons all over the body. They are activated by compressions, traction, and elongation.

Proprioception can be a tool for calming, organising and self-regulating the brain and nervous system. 15 minutes of proprioception activities can have a 1-2 hour positive effect.

### **Activities**

- Deep pressure touch: hand hugs or squeezes, pressure on legs, arms, feet, and back
- Heavy/hard work – muscle engagement
- Ankles – toe walking

### **Ideas for Incorporating Proprioception into the Day**

- Wheelbarrow walking
- Carry heavy items (e.g. laundry basket)
- Chewy food
- Drinking smoothies/thick milkshakes through a straw
- Push/pull heavy items (e.g. shopping trolley)
- Digging in sand/soil
- Cushion games – jump on them, cushion sandwich
- Cycling
- Rake leaves, shovel snow
- Push a wheelbarrow
- Carry buckets of water
- Deep pressure hugs / bear hugs
- Heavy quilts/blankets/bedding
- Swimming
- Gymnastics
- Compression clothing (i.e., leotards, leggings, athletic clothing)
- Wash the car, hoovering
- Make a tent/pillow cave
- Hang from a trapeze type bar
- Headstands against the wall
- Large gym ball activities – roll on it, walk on hands, lie backwards and rock back and forth
- Roll up tightly in a blanket – be a sausage roll
- Crab walking, bear walking, frog leaping
- Trampoline
- Marching, stomping, skipping, running, hopping
- Crawl through a fabric tunnel

## **Co-Regulation**

It's vital to remember that children will not be able to regulate by themselves. It's the role of the adult to act as the co-regulator. The co-regulator needs to be calm and stable.

Deep breathing, blowing, and sucking activities are helpful in promoting a calm and stable emotional state.

It may be helpful to include some of the activities in this leaflet as part of a child's daily routine as this may enable them to manage their routine and remain more regulated throughout the day.

If you anticipate times when your child may struggle, i.e., a time daily transition and their anxieties might be heightened, it may be helpful to plan in a sensory regulating activity prior to the transition as they may cope with the transition more positively.

Not all of the activities listed may work for your child, or they may work one day and not the next, as how children experience any change and challenge will vary on a day to day and situational basis.

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## **For Further Ideas and Information**

### **Your Essential Guide to Understanding Sensory Processing Disorder**

**By Angie Voss**

This practical and easy-to-read guide was created to give the reader a more in-depth look at sensory processing disorder and sensory integration, yet not so much that it is overwhelming.

### **The Scared Gang**

**By Éadaoin Breathnach**

The Scared Gang series helps children to recognise their own survival patterns through the Scared Gang characters. Each character represents a different pattern and tells children how they can self-regulate through the use of food and sensory-based activities.