



Sensory Activities

Proprioception

Proprioceptive input (sensations from joints, muscles and connective tissues that lead to body awareness) can be obtained by lifting, pushing, and pulling heavy objects as well as by engaging in activities that compress (push together) or distract (pull apart) the joints like playing tug-of-war.

- Make a "sandwich" by firmly pressing on your child's arms legs and back with pillows or make a "burrito" by rolling him/her up in a blanket.
- Push his own stroller/cart/wagon.
- Push a stroller or cart filled with weighted objects such as groceries.
- Wear a backpack or fanny pack filled with toys (not too heavy!).
- Raking leaves.

Vestibular

Vestibular input (the sense of movement, centered in the inner ear) can be obtained by spinning and swinging, and to a lesser extent, any type of movement. For calming, use slow, rhythmic movement paired with proprioceptive activities.

- Swing on playground swings, trying various types of swings and movements, such as front and back and side to side.
- Spin on a Sit n' Spin, Dizzy Disc Jr., or office chair.
- Run in circles.
- Ride a carousel.
- Hold your child's arm and legs and spin him/her around like an airplane.
- Jump-rope.

Tactile

Tactile input is the sense of touch and includes texture, temperature, pressure, and more. The tactile system includes the skin, as well as inner skin linings such as inside the mouth. Some children are defensive and unwilling to touch messy material. Respect where child is and use a paint brush or a tool to explore.

- Drink plain seltzer or carbonated mineral water to experience bubbles in his/her mouth (you can flavor with lemon, lime, etc).
- Play with foamy soap or shaving cream, sand, fingerpaint, glitter glue, cookie dough, and cake batter.
- Use the playground sandbox or create your own at home.
- Filling a bin with dry beans and rice or other materials.
- Use clay such as Play-Doh.



Auditory

Auditory input is what we hear and is neuroanatomically connected with the vestibular sense.

- Listen to a variety of music- recorded and live.
- Get out in nature and listen.
- Go to the beach.
- Listen to a thunderstorm or windstorm.
- Listen to birds singing, try to identify what direction a given bird is calling from.
- Listen to natural sounds recordings such as a rainstorm, waves crashing against the beach, or birds in the forest. Natural sound recordings with light instrumentation with flutes, keyboards, etc.
- Play a listening game: sit very quietly and try to identify the sounds you hear (traffic, the hum of the refrigerator, a door shutting, etc.).

Visual

Simplify the visual field in his home or school environment for a calming effect. Alternately, if your child seems visually "tuned out," i.e., does not seem to respond easily to visual stimulation, add brightly colored objects to attract visual attention.

- Hide clutter in bins or boxes or behind curtains or doors—a simple, solid-color curtain hung over a bookshelf instantly reduces visual clutter.
- Use solid colored rugs instead of patterned ones and solid-colored walls (for example, avoid patterned wallpaper).
- Have your child sit at the front of a classroom where there is less visual distraction. Sit away from the window to avoid the distraction of the outdoors. Some children do best sitting in the back of the room so they can monitor what other kids are doing without constantly turning around.
- Avoid toys, clothes, towels, etc., in colors that your child find stress-inducing such as bright orange, yellow, and red (your child may have a different "hated" color.)

Smell

Certain odors can stimulate, calm, or send a child into sensory overload.

- Explore scents with your child to find the ones that work best to meet your goal (either to calm or to wake up). Calming scents: lavender, vanilla, rose, peppermint, and lemon.
- Play a smelling game with your SI child. Have him/her close his/her eyes or wear a blindfold and try to identify smells such as maple syrup, apple, peanut butter, and soap.



Taste

Taste input is strongly influenced by smell (as an experiment, chew some gum until the flavor is gone, then hold a lemon under your nose; the gum will taste like lemon).

- Strong tastes can be stimulating or arousing, including peppermint, sour gummy bear, lemon, barbeque or other strong-flavored food.
- Children will be more likely to taste something if they help make it. Let him/her help you select foods. For example, let him/her choose between chicken or fish, string beans or sugar snaps, and potato or rice. Then let your child arrange the meat in the baking pan, break off vegetable tips and dump in water, and so on. Let him/her help you arrange food on each plate into a pleasing presentation.
- "Play with your food": A so-called picky eater may be more willing to eat "rocks and trees" than meatballs and broccoli.

Calming

- Sucking, a thick shake with a straw, hard candies or a Popsicle
- Cuddling, or wrapping a blanket around the shoulders
- Pushing against walls with the hands, sides of the body, back and buttocks

Alerting

- Light touch, light tickles with a feather, back scratch, koosh ball
- Fast, irregular movement, bouncing on a therapy ball, playing tag and jumping
- Crunchy foods: pretzels, crackers, popcorn or raw vegetables

Organizing

- Pushing and pulling activities: playing with a 'stretch Armstrong toy or stiff clay, pushing a loaded cart
- Moving furniture, putting up chairs
- Carrying and passing out books
- Hiking, climbing, tug of war
- Chewy foods: gum, day old bagels, stale licorice, fruit bars, dried foot etc.

Information and ideas were taken from the website <http://www.sensorysmarts.com/diet.html> from the book Raising a Sensory Smart Child The Definitive Handbook for Helping Your Child with Sensory Integration Issues by Lindsey Biel, M.A., OTR/L and Nancy Peske Foreword by Temple Grandin

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