



Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Instructional Resources Library

www.tsbvi.edu | 512-454-8631 | 1100 W. 45th St. | Austin, TX 78756

Sensory Integration and Sensory Motor Activities

Tactile Play Activities

Try the following ideas for tactile stimulation. If your child or student will not touch materials with their hands and fingers - don't push - try letting them touch with a spoon or fork or straw, try wearing dish gloves to get started. Keep soft cloths and water ready for cleanup. Provide washcloths for frequent hand wiping as needed. If touching bath foam or finger paint is too stressful put a small amount into a zip lock bag and hold and squeeze the bag. Begin play with dry textures if wet, messy materials are too stressful.

Try **water play** outside of demanding situations such as bathing and tooth-brushing. Use various textures of washcloths, sponges, water toys, squirters, water guns. Water plants with a spray bottle. Clean and wipe tables or floors with sponges and a wash-up bucket of water. Play with cool and warm temperatures. Help wash dishes in warm water and rinse in cool.

Fill large **storage bins with dry beans or rice**, encourage play in the bin for hands and feet. Hide small toys for searching, use cups and coffee cans for pouring, stir with large spoons, play with funnels and other kitchen toys. Pour beans or other textured material outside on the sidewalk and try to walk across.

Use lotion for **firm touch massage**. Teach self-massage. Remember that firm, deep touch is calming and organizing.

Consult an OT or PT familiar with **skin brushing and joint compressions**. This is a technique recommended to help reduce tactile defensiveness with frequent, structured tactile and proprioceptive input.

Art activities: finger paint, modeling clay, glue and glitter, glue and sand. Make art with pasta and glue or string and glue.

Create **feely boxes** or bags with a variety of textured materials and various textured toys. Fill with fabric swatches to feel, discriminate, label or match. Fill with wooden puzzle shapes, beads, etc... to identify and describe.

For **hand fidgets**, keep a fanny pack available with a variety of textured items inside. For squeezing try stress balls, thera-band, thera-tube, and stretch toys. Use auditory squeeze toys for play.

Cooking activities - mixing and stirring cookie dough, pushing cookie dough into cooking cutters. Measuring and pouring ingredients. Make pudding and jello, sift flour with hands.

Carefully introduce **various textures** for exploration and play. Place materials on a cooking sheet or plastic placemat - shaving cream, bath foam, lotion, play dough, silly putty, toy slime (gak). Introduce toys for ideas such as a bath foam or shaving cream car wash. Drive toy car through shaving cream or draw shapes and write designs with fingers.

Play dough - use rolling pin, cut dough with safe/dull scissors, practice cutting with knife and fork, use cookie cutters and molds, hide items to search for (coins, marbles, pebbles, or small toys).

Sand play - Use cookie sheet or plastic covering over table or play outside. Use clean dry sand with spray bottle filled with water for adding moisture. Play with cookie cutters or add toys - plastic dinosaurs, and toy cars. Write in sand, build shapes, build a sandcastle.

Fabric and texture play: use carpet squares for walking on - space out squares to find with toes. Use swatches of various types of fabric (corduroy, satin, velvet, fake fur). Play and walk on egg crate foam - also use foam to roll up inside.

Trace raised lines of **tactile maps**.

Any pushing through the hands will help. Such as on the tummy over a yoga ball holding body weight through arms and hands. This **prone weight bearing** is very helpful for tactile tolerance, general strength, postural control, and proprioceptive/vestibular input.

Theraputty is a resistive exercise material used by therapists - colors vary according to resistive strength. Hide toys, coins, & buttons inside for tactile searching. Keep in a sealed container and be careful not to get on clothes or carpet (it will stain and stick!)

Try **vibration** with massagers or vibrating mats or toys, squiggly pens, or electric toothbrushes.

Proprioceptive Play Activities

Move as much as possible! Jump on a trampoline or a mini-tramp. Bounce on yoga balls. Outside play on all kinds of equipment if possible for supervised climbing across monkey bars and up and down a slide.

Prone weight bearing - such as four-point crawling or on the stomach over a therapy ball holding weight through arms and upper body. If strong enough, try wheelbarrow walking. (Prone weight bearing is very important for postural strength, upper body and arm/hand strengthening, and reflex inhibition).

Scooter board activities: for small size scooter boards sit cross-legged and propel with hands. Ideally have long size scooter boards available for riding on the tummy to propel with arms. Add wrist weights for increased proprioceptive and pressure sensation. Try all directions, forward backward turning full circles left to right. Push off from a wall to propel backward. Crash into cardboard brick wall or stacked boxes. Ride scooter board down a ramp to crash into toy bowling pins or crash into a large pillow. Ride a scooter board short distances to search for and pick up toys or bean bags and return. Try prone on scooter board with a large rope to pull forward for hand over hand reach.

Add weights to items for more feedback. For example add weight to a cane or pre-cane to help keep it in the correct position and to provide greater pressure feedback. Small size wrist and ankle weights are available - these can be worn for extra proprioceptive feedback and can also be added to other items.

Ask OT/PT if a weighted vest might be helpful. Weighted blankets are available or try heavy quilts. Neck and shoulder wraps are available in drug stores sometimes designed to go in the microwave for heat - these can be used without heating around the neck or held in the lap. Weighted sweatshirts can be made easily by sewing seams shut after filling with dry beans or rice or sand. Wear loosely over the shoulder and back or on the lap.

Hang from a trapeze bar or chin up bar - if this is too scary have a step stool to stand on and just feel the pull through the arms and hands without having to support full weight.

Teach simple **isometric exercises** such as wall push-ups and chair push-ups. Teach modified push-ups and sit-ups.

Practice **pouring** over the sink or outside from heavy containers - gallon and half gallon jugs. Practice pouring with pitchers filled with sand or other dry materials.

Use **squeeze** horns such as a bike horn. Have a variety of stress balls - there are many different types and interesting toys for squeezing. Wring water from sponges and cloths. Squeeze bottle glue and squeeze bottle puff paints for art. Use spray bottles to water plants or keep spray bottles at sinks or in tubs for play.

Zoomball game is a toy with a plastic ball strung on two ropes. The ropes have handles on both ends and the object is to pull arms apart quickly to send the ball to your partner. Arms are spread quickly and closed quickly for a successful pass.

Try using **tools** with supervision - hammer, screwdriver, pliers, or sanding wood. Use dull/safe scissors to cut heavy paper or cardstock.

Pull with a partner for **tug-o-war** games. Pull a friend in a wagon or push/pull a laundry cart.

Roll in foam pad or quilt for **deep pressure games** the hot dog the burrito or the enchilada. Use rhythmical touch with hands or roll over with a therapy ball. Try weighted balls such as a medicine ball (weighted PE ball).

Climb and lie under large pillows, bean bags, mattresses, or cushions. If other students are available have them try to crawl across and then take turns being underneath.

Throw balls against a wall. Throw to the left and right sides and backward overhead.

Vestibular Play Activities

Sit and bounce on yoga balls. Try prone (on the tummy positions) and supine (lying on the back) - give support for trying to lie back and stretch the back and hang the head backward.

Stationary bike and treadmill exercise. Ride tandem bikes. Help a younger child ride tricycles and bikes with training wheels for left/right integration and reciprocal control.

Ride stand-up scooters (with handlebars) and support. Roller skate with hand hold support or put a large belt around the body to hold on to.

Toy **bouncy shoes** or moon shoes: these are large toy shoes that fit over regular shoes to bounce, jump, and walk with.

Try as many types of **swings** as possible. Standard playground swings, platform swings, bolster swings, pogo swings (a bouncy and rotational swing) and hammock swings.

Use **rocker boards and spin boards**. Both are low to the ground and the rocker board can be used in sitting or standing with support. Try a four-point position or a tall kneel position with support. The spin board is only used in sitting!

Try a **T-stool**. Try to keep balance while throwing a ball against the wall.

Rolling games or races, rolling down or up hills outside. (Rolling is terrific for tactile, proprioceptive, & vestibular input and reflex inhibition).

Practice **balancing on one foot**. Hop with feet together hop on one foot. Jump one foot to the other. Practice marching, running, or stomping in place.

Try very low **balance beams** or tandem walking in a straight line (heel toe, heel toe). Use hand hold support; hold onto a hula hoop or dowel - add a bean bag to balance on the head for a greater challenge. Place a ladder on the floor to try and step across separate rungs.

Use an **inner tube** to step or hop inside and to walk around the edges for balance.

Balance in **tall kneel** position or half kneel. Toss a ball against the wall while holding balance or keep bean bag on the head.

For smaller feet, **place feet in shoe boxes** to slide along the floor. Try walking with swim fins.

Directional movement practice- use a heavy wooden chair for sit/stand commands, in front/behind move to the left/right sides, circle the chair, three steps forward/backward from chair. Add music, slow and fast movements, combine with Simon Says and Red Light Green Light games. Practice directional controls for facing the front of the room, the back, and either wall. Practice facing north, south, east, and west. Try quick change games for moving from sitting to standing to four point to stand on one foot, etc., and practice turning toward sound.

Parachute games for up/down arm movements and shaking. If a group is available, try having kids crawl under to the other side. Add a lightweight ball and bounce the parachute to toss the ball over the side.

Heavy Work Activities

Heavy work activities are thought to provide the longest sensory effect with combined benefits of proprioceptive and vestibular stimulation (heavy work routines potentially have a calming effect on the nervous system for four to six hours).

Heavy work tasks are any activities that require whole body movement and resistance such as carrying heavy objects or carrying large size boxes, pushing through heavy doors, pushing a grocery or work cart, pushing a laundry basket, pulling a friend in a wagon, helping to move furniture, vacuuming - Any activity that requires resistance with movement.

Lisa Ricketts, OTR

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