

Sensory Activities For Any Child

Sensory activities fall into different categories. Perhaps the most useful one for self-regulation is Proprioceptive Input. That's a fancy word for "heavy work" that engages your joints. These activities make you feel grounded and can be calming for a high-running child or invigorating for a low-running kid. This batch of activities create Proprioceptive Input:

- Jump (on a mini-trampoline, from a chair to a sofa, on the bed, etc.)
- Wheelbarrow walking or races
- Donkey Kicks
- ABC Pushups (Push-up plank position, touch chest with hand and say a letter of the alphabet, all the way up to the letter Z. Each letter said, the student changes the hand that touches the chest)
- Bear walk
- Crab walk
- Play leap frog
- Tummy time push ups (for babies)
- Toddlers can push their own strollers, the laundry or grocery cart
- Have your toddler or child carry a backpack full of their own toys and books
- Hammer ice cubes in a plastic bag (then use them for lemonade!)
- Pillow Fight
- Stuffed animal catch
- Hanging from a chin-up bar
- Bouncing on hopping ball
- Tug-of-war
- Hopscotch
- Wrestling
- Tickle fight
- Drumming
- Banging on pots and pans
- Have a parade and march
- Wiping the counters
- Sweeping
- Swiffering
- Dustbusting
- Unloading the washing machine and the dryer
- Taking out the trash
- Water balloon catch
- Beanbag catch
- Push-o-war (put palms against each other and push as hard as you can)
- Animal footsteps (Child lays down and chooses an animal and using your fingers or hands try to make it feel like that animal walking over back and limbs.) *Vestibular Input (swinging and spinning) is intense and long-lasting sensory input. It should be provided in doses and parents should watch and be sensitive to how their children react and help them learn to manage this type of input to keep them even.*
- Swinging: Try different types of swinging to see how it feels (tire, rope, belly, etc)
- Spinning

- Run in circles
- Hang upside down
- Swing your child around from their arms or legs
- Drag them on a sheet or blanket
- Rock in a rocking chair (*Tactile Input: Many kids are overly sensitive to tactile input. Tags, pant buttons, getting wet, or even the feeling of foods in the mouth can drive some kids batty. Doing these activities can help children get used to tactile stimulation gradually and can be fun for all kids.*)
- Make a kid sandwich by pressing down on him between two pillows or couch cushions
- Make a kid burrito by rolling her tightly in a blanket
- Roll out the cookie dough by rolling a big ball firmly over the back and limbs
- Make your own sandbox with a bowl full of dry beans or styrofoam peanuts.
- Pour salt on a cookie sheet and paint with your fingers.
- Spread beans out in a baking tray or pan and make a construction site for trucks. Bury small toys in rice and have them do an archeological dig
- Go on a texture walk
- Have a texture scavenger hunt at home
- Put shaving cream on a placemat to squish around
- Mix cookie dough or cake batter with hands
- Make play dough
- Make a touch book of different textures from your home
- Put single items in paper bags and let kids try to guess what they are
- Play with face paints
- Repot the plants

In the bath: Some sensory defensive kids hate getting wet, but these activities make bathing more fun for all kids:

- Add food coloring to the water
- Ladles, cups, strainers, squirters, funnels
- Play with shaving cream
- Soap crayons or bath paints
- Rub with different textures while in the bath - a smooth or nubby washcloth, a loofah, a nail brush.

Some kids need extra oral-motor activities, but they tend to be calming for everyone.

- Use a vibrating toothbrush
- Sip seltzer
- Lick lemons
- Crunch ice
- Use chewelry
- Make smoothies and suck through a straw
- Practice chewing gum and blowing bubbles
- Use crazy straws

Breathing is especially important for kids with low muscle tone, but we can all use to exercise our lungs and benefit from the therapeutic effects of breathing deeply.

- Play soccer by blowing a cottonball across the table scoring if you can blow it off the other person's end
- Have a cottonball race
- Make bubble mountains in a bowl with a straw and soapy water
- Blow gently on each other's faces (see who can blow the longest)

Visual, Olfactory (Smell), and Auditory Stimulating Activities:

- Sit quietly and listen to nature. (You can also use nature sounds recordings)
- Play a listening game. Sit very quietly and try to guess the sounds you hear.
- Let them play with the stereo dial to experiment with loud and soft sounds.
- Play by candlelight
- Turn off the lights and play flashlight tag
- Shadow puppets
- Build a fort or tent
- Hide under a blanket and read by flashlight
- Play catch with a balloon
- Do mazes or dot to dots
- Trace your body or hands
- Wear sunglasses

Smells: Explore how your child reacts to different smells. If you find some are soothing or alerting, get lotions, soaps, or candles to help regulate mood.

- Using a blindfold have them guess different smells. (peanut butter, maple syrup, apples, etc)
- Try giving a child a strong flavored candy or gum before trying a new food at dinner.
- Eat sensory savvy snacks
- Tickle Fingers (trace fingers lightly over the skin)
- Put on lotion
- Pet the cat
- Butterfly kisses (eyelash kisses)
- Give each other massages
- Make extreme faces
- Practice blowing out birthday candles on playdough cakes
- Put dollops of different colored paints in a baggie and squish around to mix the paints.
- Create a sensory savvy spot (beanbag chair or pile of pillows with soft lighting, soothing items such as books and stuffed animals, music with headphones and a snack)