

Pediatric Development Center



~ Newsletter ~
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We provide occupational therapy evaluation, treatment and consultation for children with developmental delays, autism/Asperger, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, sensory processing disorders, attention, behavioral concerns, handwriting, and other areas of weakness.

Contact us for further information:

125 Presumpscot St. Portland, ME.
(207) 699-5531

Good Resources:

www.southpawenterprises.com

www.creativekidsathome.com

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Tactile Fun in the Sun

Deanna Macioce, MS, OTR/L

“So, you have a child who hates to get messy. Maybe he is the one who chooses not to participate in the finger painting activity at school or the one who wipes his hands clean as soon as anything gets on them. Or does she choose not to walk on the grass or even play in the snow, or even requests to have all of the tags cut out from her clothing? If any of these descriptions fit your child or someone you may work with, the child may be labeled as "tactile defensive". Tactile defensiveness is a condition that describes a child who reacts negatively or with alarm to a tactile input which is generally considered harmless or non-irritating to a person with a typically developing sensory system.

To help children overcome tactile defensiveness suggestions are given to include various play activities to help increase a child's tolerance to tactile stimuli. Often these activities tend to be messy and goopy, and therefore many parents are left to pick and choose the ones suitable for home. This does not truly allow a child to become engulfed in the whole experience. That is why summer is a great time to bring all those tactile activities outside. Being outdoors to do these activities will provide some good quality playtime for those children who are tactile defensive.

Now is the time to bring out the shaving cream. Using a vinyl table cloth or tarp, allow your children to create an entire art masterpiece, or better yet, whip off the shoes and go 'ice skating' in summer. And once you are all done, use the hose for easy clean up.

This is also a great time of year to spruce up those flower beds or plant a vegetable garden. Allow your child to help dig up the dirt and begin planting. Begin with using gardening gloves, moving then to thin, medical gloves, and if you can get them to go bare handed. This will really let them get dirty while exploring the earth.

Take some time to just play in the grass. Take off their shoes and let them run! Feeling the grass with their hands, and allowing the blades to touch their skin is a great experience. Make your playtime in the grass fun with tossing or kicking a ball, log rolling, or having races, including running, hopping, crab walking, and bear walking.

Get creative with some full body painting using pudding. Not only with this provide a sticky, wet, soft tactile input to the skin, it is also very yummy to lick your fingers clean. And then enjoy a trip through the sprinkler for a fun way to clean up.

Fill a baby pool with dry media-beans, rice, sand or pasta allowing for more of a full body experience. Hide items in the pool and give your child a treasure hunt list to find the items. Placing a tablecloth under the pool will also make clean up a breeze. If you want to get really adventurous, fill the pool with cooked spaghetti allowing your child to take a 'swim'.

Any type of water play is a great activity, especially for those children who do not enjoy the bathing ritual. Provide cups and bowls of various sizes for scooping and dumping the water out. And using any type of squeeze toy also helps with fine motor strengthening.

So, now is the time to take advantage of the summer weather and the ability to be messy outside. This will be truly beneficial for the child who is tactile defensive. And these activities are also great and lots of fun for any child.”

Bubbles, Bubbles, Everywhere

Deanna Macioce, MS, OTR/L

Bubbles are an activity enjoyed by children of all ages. In infancy, it is recommended as a great way to introduce visual skills and interaction between parent and child, but as you move along the growth span, bubbles can be used as a great simple outdoor play activity for toddlers and older children. However, when you really take the time to fully examine the task of bubbles and different ways that they can be used, you can see why they make such a wonderful therapeutic activity. Bubbles are not only an ideal way to address oral motor skills, but can be used for working on visual, fine, and gross motor skills, as well as core stability and bilateral coordination skills. They are also a wonderful activity because they are quite simple; little equipment and cost, as well as you can take them just about anywhere.

As a therapeutic activity, bubbles are most obviously used as an oral motor activity because they work on blowing and mouth skills. Addressing lip closure, oral motor musculature, and respiration skills, bubbles are great for those children who have oral dyspraxia. For

those who struggle with blowing from the wand, it works good to have an adult blow the bubbles, catch one on the wand, and then allow the child to blow it from there. Once they are able to blow on their own, trying to catch the bubbles themselves helps with visual skills, as well as motor planning. In addition, there are a variety of blowing apparatuses available on the market, both in stores and in therapeutic catalogs. Although we tell our children not to blow bubbles in their milk, spice up the oral motor activity by filling a large bowl with water and a small amount of liquid soap. Using a straw, have the child to blow into the bowl (be cautious that they don't suck in) and an avalanche of bubbles will appear.

Visually, bubbles help to address visual scanning skills. As children try to use their eyes to follow the flying bubbles they are strengthening the coordination of their eyes, as well as improving their abilities to focus. In addition, when a child blows from the wand themselves have them use their eyes to focus on the wand and watch as the bubble forms.

Once the bubbles are off and flying, having a child chase to pop the bubbles works on overall body coordination and gross motor skills. Using their feet to stomp on the bubbles is a great way to add in the lower extremities, and the Gazillion Bump n Go Bubble Bug is an excellent toy on the market that keeps the bubbles low to the ground to work on this. Shoulder, trunk and overall core

stability can definitely be addressed with how you position your child. If you have the child sit on a small chair, t-stool, or therapy ball and reach using an isolated index finger to pop the bubbles, you will be able to work on the key areas needed for fine motor activities, especially writing and scissor skills. Instead of using just an isolated index finger, having children use both hands to clap and pop the bubbles helps to pull in bilateral coordination skills. Have them focus on keeping stability in the shoulders and elbows and this will help to strengthen the muscles of these areas, as well as allow them to have both hands meet up together.

For children with sensory processing concerns, as well as spectrum disorders, bubble activities are used as a way to encourage interaction and try imitative play. And we can't forget that bubbles can also be used as way to work on attention and focus. For children who are able to perform bubble blowing on their own, having them blow bubbles before table top work is a great way to get them to calm, settle and be ready to focus.

Please note that there are various ways to be creative with bubbles found in many of the resources on activities for sensory processing disorder, so take some time to explore all the fun that bubbles can bring to your home or therapy sessions. Therefore, when you are looking for an activity that can be adapted in a variety of ways, you don't have to look too far.