



*Pediatric Development
Center*

*Newsletter
March 2008*

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. 361 US Route One, Falmouth (207) 781-4830

Parent Support Group:

We want to support parents in any way we can and would like to have a monthly meeting to discuss your issues. Please call the office to let us know when would be good for you and we will put together a meeting. Look for upcoming courses for summer.

Good Books

Parenting a Child with Sensory Processing Disorder by Christopher Auer, MA, and Susan Blumberg, PhD

Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline by Becky Bailey, PhD

Physical Activities for Improving Children's Learning and Behavior by Billye Ann Cheatum and Allison Hammond

Sensory Diet

Parents always want to know, what is a sensory diet, and what are good activities to do. A sensory diet describes the specific sensory activities used throughout the day to fuel the body to attain an organized state, and stay there.

“By providing beneficial sensory input throughout the day, you can create profound, long-lasting changes in your child's nervous system, which in time will become permanent.” Raising a Sensory Smart Child What guides the sensory diet is providing the right kind of sensory input at the right time and in the right amount, so the child does not need to resort to inappropriate ways to attain what they need.

Everyone benefits from a sensory diet. A child may not recognize what to do when they are acting hyper or sluggish, so it is up to us to know when to provide the appropriate activities so they will eventually take responsibility for initiating them. Some of the same activities will meet the needs of both the hyper and tired acting child. “Heavy work” (proprioceptive input) activities will be the most organizing for the nervous system and help kids to calm down and reorganize. The activities presented below are a few to begin with, but may need to be modified depending on the age of the child, their arousal level, environment, and what tools you have to work with.



Proprioceptive Input: Heavy work patterns provide joint compression and joint traction. Your OT can

assist you with the activities and which are most appropriate for your child.

1. wheelbarrow walks: follow a winding path of string; pick up small items (cheerios, M&M's, beads, puzzle pieces); upstairs.
2. pushups: wall pushups, chair pushups, floor pushups
3. jumping: on a mini trampoline, the bed, from bed to pile of cushions (or bean bag chairs), stable chair onto the floor or pillows, over pillows, or onto targets.
4. animal walks: donkey kicks, crab walking, frog jumps, heavy marching.
5. pushing or pulling: a stroller, cart, wagon, laundry basket full of toys or a sibling; wheelbarrow or lawnmower.
6. weight: wear a backpack of books or toys; fanny pack; weighted vest; weighted blanket or stuffed animal.
7. housework: wash the car, floor or windows; pushing the vacuum cleaner; taking out trash; load/unload the washer.
8. games: hopscotch; tug-of-war; sports (swimming, skiing, karate, biking, hiking, etc.); play wrestling; po-go stick or ball; catch with a weighted ball or water filled balloon.
9. fine motor: resistive materials such as clay or play doh; tearing paper and scrunching to make “snowballs”; hammering golf T's into Styrofoam; banging drums or cymbals

Vestibular Input: Movement input can be the most intense and long lasting input, but be aware of sensory overload. The movement can be obtained by swinging, jumping or spinning.



1. Swinging: Slow, rhythmic movement tends to be calming, while fast and irregular movement will be alerting. Movement can be back and forth or up and down. Be alert to your child's responses to the movement, stopping often to observe their reactions. A child sensitive to movement will need small amounts at first, in order to feel safe, and gradually increase the input as tolerated. A child who craves the movement, wanting higher and faster may unexpectedly move into overload and have difficulty calming down, rather than having the input organize him. Observe when the movement needs to stop before reaching that point. For a baby it is important to move them through various planes, such as dancing, dipping, flying like an airplane, swinging gently in a blanket, and bouncing. For a toddler use of swings, cart or wagon rides, pulling on the floor on a blanket, and dancing. With older children try playground swings, tire swing, rope swing, disc swing, mooring ball swing, hammock swing. Never force a child to get on a swing. They may feel better sitting on an adult's lap for gentle swinging at first. The playground environment may be over stimulating to attempt the movement.

2. Spinning: rotary movement is good vestibular input, however, a child sensitive to movement will be able to tolerate it only in graded amounts until they are able to better organize the input and feel safe. Be aware of over stimulation and sensitive to the child's reactions. For a child who is over sensitive to the movement, try small amounts while they sit on your lap to spin slowly in an office chair. It is the starting and stopping of the movement that organizes the vestibular receptors. Spinning activities include the Sit 'n Spin, hammock swing, tire swing, platform swing, Dizzy Disc Jr.; somersaults, cartwheels, carnival rides, hold by wrists and spin in circles, or while holding wrists, have the child facing you and walk up your thighs and "flip" over.



Tactile Input: touch input includes texture and pressure as well as temperature, and a sensitive child will tolerate pressure touch much better than light touch, where a child who craves touch input will be touching everything as well as

seeking pressure touch. A sensitive child will typically tolerate touch from parents better than others. Unexpected touch can be disorganizing. Pressure touch can be done by "squishing" the child with pillows, rolling the up in a blanket, rolling a therapy ball over their body with pressure (like rolling out pizza dough), or a "family sandwich" by squeezing him between parents. Bins of textures such as sand, cornmeal, rice, Styrofoam pieces, etc. Hide toys in the textures or run trucks or boats through it. Play with shaving cream, pudding or coolwhip to draw letters/shapes; finger paint; glitter glue; make cookies and mold dough with hands, etc. Let the child use a stick or paint brush if they are initially fearful of the textures. Using clay or play doh, roll out into a "worm" or squish to make a "cookie"; use scissors or cutters to make shapes. A "feely bag" with textures or items for them to match or identify. Planting seeds in dirt. Craft projects such as collages, scrapbooks, weaving, knitting, building, sewing, etc. Vibration can be quite organizing: vibrating bugs, massagers, teethers, pillows, pen, Bumble Ball, toothbrushes, and more. Deep pressure with massage, hugs, squishing with pillows and pressure to the hands and feet. Your therapist may suggest a "Brushing Program", which is a specific program developed by Patricia Willbarger, PhD, OTR/L, who coined the phrase "sensory diet".



Next month, more activities!!!!