



SIMPLE SENSORY IDEAS FOR IN THE CLASSROOM

Engaging our vestibular system, the movement of your head, can have a longer lasting impact on assisting with providing sensory input. Classroom breaks are important in regulating a child's attention and emotions throughout the day.



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Below is a list of activities and ideas that might be helpful in the classroom to help maintain a 'calm-alert' state. Add movement where ever possible. Action-based learning allows the brain and body to connect, stay regulated and improves attention. Here are a few ideas for your class.....

- Moving furniture or gym mats
- Cleaning the blackboard/whiteboard or desks
- Climbing equipment and swinging on monkey bars. Encourage the child to use the school playground equipment in fitness breaks or fruit snack times.
- Carry heavy object (pile of books, lunch order box, school bag)
- Employ the use of weighted lap or shoulder cushion/ toy or weighted vest. This can assist in creating a calming influence on the nervous system by providing deep pressure and feedback to the muscles. (Caution should be used when using weighted products so please consult your Occupational Therapist).
- Sending the child on errands during the day to provide additional movement breaks. This can also include carrying a box (with weighted products) to and from one area of the school to another, to provide additional muscle input. Returning message boxes or library books is a common one!
- Use of a wobble cushion for the child to sit on, either on their chair or when sitting on the floor, is helpful.
- A plastic tub with some blankets and cushions can be useful for the child to squeeze into and sit for a short time. This provides deep pressure to help dampen the central nervous system and help calm.
- The use of a fitball in the classroom environment is a great tool to use to give both movement of the head and muscle input, both which assist with self-regulation. Rules are needed for such use

in the classroom but can be very effective to use instead of a chair. The use of a mat or hula hoop to create a boundary for the ball to stay in is very useful.

- The child can take it to the corner and either:
 - Bounce up and down on it for 5 minutes
 - Roll backwards and forwards on it
 - Push it against the wall, whilst sitting against it with your knees up
 - Walk it up and down the wall, holding it for 10 seconds at the top and then slowly walking it back down the wall..... and MORE!
 - Incorporate the use of the fitball into the lesson plan
 - eg have the child counting blocks or sorting sight words with their belly on the ball
- Use of movement apps like "Go Noodle" or "Just dance are engaging for kids. Use between each lesson change
- Before recess or lunch, ask the class to form a line and get them to crawl under all the class tables, or perform an animal walk to go and get their lunch boxes.
- After recess and lunch children are often heightened due to the social anxieties and sensory experiences during this time. These breaks are not long enough for our bodies to self-regulate. In the first part of the break their activity levels go up so then when they come back in they can be more heightened than before as they haven't had enough time or the right type of movement in this time. Take them out for a run around the oval for 10 minutes after these breaks to help regulation and focus. Make it part of a numeracy or literacy lesson, practising their sums or spelling whilst running around if you are concerned you are losing curriculum time, but know that you will gain more from your class from spending 10 minutes regulating than trying to teach them when they come back in dysregulated!

ISOMETRIC EXERCISES

- Pushing against the wall "trying to push the wall over. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 3-5 times



- Pushing against your own hands with your elbows pointing outwards. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 3-5 times
- Chair pushes: Pushing down on the chair and trying to lift your bottom off the chair. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 3-5 times. These can also be done when sitting on the floor without a chair.
- Chair pulls: With your hands under the seat of the chair, pulling up. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 3-5 times
- Bringing your knees up and hugging your knees tightly. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 3-5 times
- Pushing down on the desk. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 3-5 times

USE OF A FIDGET/FOCUS TOOL.

These are objects that are held in the hands to help regulate their level of alertness (attention and activity). This allows for improved concentration and attention to task. Fidget/focus tools can include hand exercisers, stress balls and other non-distracting hand-held items. Please speak to your OT if you would like to purchase a “Friendly Focus Kit” or individual fidgets.

Please note that after each passive or active vestibular input exercise, Learn Sense Grow recommends completing a deep pressure activity (such as rolling on the fitball, self-squeeze or massage and/or using weighted products) to help achieve the ‘calm-alert’ state for longer periods of time.

Each activity should be followed by a mindfulness exercise to help bring your child back to the current environment. Ask your child to take 5-10 slow deep breaths, find 5 objects in the room of a chosen colour and something beginning with a chosen letter of the alphabet.

