



Sensory Diet Suggested Activities

This handout is intended for use as a guide for activities used in a sensory diet. The rationale and references supporting these activities are complex, and can be explained to you by your occupational therapist. Correct implementation of these activities should be done under the direction of a registered occupational therapist.

Pressure input:

Deep pressure input through the muscles, joints and skin are some of the safest and most effective organizing inputs.

- swaddling or wrapping in blankets
- pillows to nestle, wrestle and cuddle in, use a variety of sizes and textures, weighted blankets, weighted or inflatable vests or cuffs at wrists/ankles
- wearing ace wraps on arms, legs, trunk; wearing spandex under garments or neoprene gloves, shorts, headbands
- wedged into a barrel with pillows
- Use of a gymnastic ball to roll over a person with careful pressure

Heavy work is active pressure type input to the muscles and joints through pushing, pulling, lifting, carrying, and "working"!

- vacuuming, carrying the laundry, carrying any load, mowing the lawn
- pushing the grocery cart, pulling a wagon, riding a bike
- stacking chairs, scrubbing tables
- push-ups or pushing against a wall
- climbing, resistance play
- feet on bungee cord at a desk
- carrying a weighted back pack

Heavy work in the hands is an effective technique that can be used easily in multiple environments. This is characterized as "fidget and focus".

- having access to one or preferable more small manipulative toys with which to simply "fidget"
- playdough/therapy putty work
- attaching a rubber tubing to back pack strap to pull on as needed
- attaching a telephone cord type key chain to belt loop to pull on or "fidget"

Oral motor inputs can be organizing when they engage the oral proprioceptors.

- chewing on fruit leather, licorice, pretzels, gum, or non food items such as aquarium tubing
- sucking through resistive, long, or "silly" straws for liquids or other play
- blowing blow toys, bubbles, or cotton balls in play

Breath work

- facilitating breath through sucking and blowing activities
- Teaching how to take a deep breath as a means of stopping and calming

Movement that is rhythmic and in a linear manner is typically calming

- porch or park swings
- rocking chair, or rocking in a lap
- use of a therapy swing or therapy ball as directed by therapist

Vibration can be a powerful input to affect organization

- vibrating pillows, electric massagers
- electric toothbrush
- making vibrating sounds, such as "mmmmm"
- feeling vibration of music from a speaker
- many musical instruments, especially electric or mouth blown create vibration (harmonica, drum machine, etc.)

Rhythm is typically a favorite calming input.

- let music be a part of daily routine. Have a bath song, a dressing song, a meal time song, etc. It helps with attention and sequencing, and can build independence - simply sing about activities as they are happening
- teach concepts with music and rhythm
- active participation with a drum, auto harp, electrical music devices, harp, etc. - listening to rhythm and quieting music of many varieties, such as environmental sounds, natural heart sounds, classical music, lullaby tapes, etc., and having these available in the car, at home, work and school

Quiet time in a small place needs to be taught, valued and practiced as a life skill in every environment

- create a hide out or comfy place for each environment
- make fidget and oral inputs and music available in this space
- books for reading /music to listen to

Community based activities incorporated into daily life facilitates a balanced, calm life style.

- hippo therapy (horse back riding with a therapeutic emphasis)
- recreation centers for swimming, yoga classes and other leisure opportunities
- martial arts (carefully selected)
- domestic duties, baking, laundry, stacking wood, yard work

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