

Proprioceptive Activities

- Carrying Heavy Loads**- Have the child carry large (but not hot or fragile) items to the table, or filled laundry baskets from room to room, or grocery bags into the house. The child can also carry a load of books, a bucket of dirt or toys, or a watering can from one spot to another.
- Pushing and Pulling**- Set grocery bags down inside the front door and have the child drag them to the kitchen. Let him push the wheelbarrow or stroller, vacuum, rake, push heavy boxes, pull a friend on a sled or blanket, or pull a loaded wagon. Hard muscular work is calming and organizing.
- Hanging**- Mount a chinning bar in the child's doorway, or hang from the monkey bars at the park. When the child suspends his/her weight from the hands, the muscles and joints send sensory messages to the brain. Shifting weight from hand to hand as in moving along a ladder builds upper-body strength.
- Pillow Fun**- Pile several large cushions, beanbag chairs, or downy comforters in a corner. Invite the child to dive, jump, roll and dig into the cushions. You could also make a "crash cushion": stuff large foam scraps, towels, blankets, etc. into a comforter cover or into a huge bag made by sewing two sheets together.
- Snail**- Place a large bag of rice or beans on the child's back and let him/her move around with a heavy "shell" on the back.
- Joint Compress**- Put one hand on the child's forearm and the other hand on his upper arm. With slow, firm pressure, push the forearm and upper arm toward the elbow, then, pull them away. Push and pull the muscles near knees and shoulders. To activate proprioceptors in other ways, press both hands down on the head; slowly straighten and bend fingers, wrists, elbows, knees ankles and toes. These extension and flexion techniques provide traction and compression to joints and are calming, especially when confined to smaller spaces, like church pews, movie theaters, cars, buses, and in airplanes, where the gravity changes.
- Body Squeeze**- Sit on the floor behind the child, straddling him/her with your legs. Put your arms around the child's knees, draw them toward the chest, and squeeze hard. Holding tight, rock back and forth.
- Bear Hugs**- More effective from behind. Repeat often.
- Pouring**- Put different amounts of sand, rice, or water into a cup or bowl. Let the child pour from one container to another.
- Opening Doors**- Make it a practice to encourage the child to open doors. Provide some assistance with heavy doors.
- Ripping**- Give your child old newspaper and let him/her tear strips and rip them up to make a pile of confetti.
- Back-to-Back Standing Up**- Position two children on the floor, back to back. Ask them to "dig their feet into the floor" and to stand up together by pressing against each other's back.
- Tug-of-War**- Get a long, thick rope or sheet and tie knots in it to make it easier to grip. Try this game as you sit, stand, or kneel
- "Bulldozer"**- One child sits in a large cardboard box or on a blanket, and another child pushes the load across the floor, using his head, shoulders, back, or feet to make it move.
- Playing Catch**- Toss a big ball or pillow back and forth.
- Roughhousing**- Pushing, pulling, rolling, and tumbling with an adult or friend can feel good all over, but this activity must be carefully supervised so no one gets hurt or overloaded with sensory stimulation. Two important reminders: Never pull on each other's clothes, and never tickle.
- Arm wrestling**- Make the child work for victory.
- Rolling Pin Fun**- Provide the child with a cylindrical piece of wood or a rolling pin without handles, so he/she presses down with his opened hands. Have the child roll real dough, playdough, crackers, clay or mud!