

## **General Calming, Organizing and Alerting Techniques**

The following list provides methods that can help calm, organize or alert the nervous system. The list must be only used as a general guideline, as activities that calm one student may be alerting to another. These strategies can be incorporated into a sensory diet or they may help deal with a specific situation.

### **Calming Techniques**

Sensory soothing or calming experiences can help any student who is anxious, but are particularly useful for students who are sensory defensive. They help to relax the nervous system and can reduce exaggerated responses to sensory input.

- warm or tepid bath
- deep pressure massage, back rub using comfort touch
- joint compressions, stretches
- snuggling in a sleeping bag, bean bag chair, large pillows, blanket wrap (neutral warmth) or swaddling for a younger child
- firm pressure and skin to skin contact (squeezes to head, trunk, shoulders, hands), finger hugs and tugs
- bear hugs (child faces away from you), hugging a teddy bear, giving self hugs, cuddling
- slow rocking or swaying - rocking chair, in adults lap or arms, on tummy in a head to heel direction (rhythmic motion)
- child uses palms to press together or against temples
- seeking out quiet area, hideout, fort or quiet corner
- slow swinging- back and forth - in a blanket or rocking chair, swing
- lycra/spandex clothing
- neoprene vest
- weighted vest, collar, lap bag
- lavender, vanilla, banana or other soothing smells
- sucking
- fidget toys
- progressive muscle relaxation
- white noise or quiet music with a steady beat
- reduced noise and light levels (turn off the TV, radio and lights)

### **Organizing Techniques**

Organizing experiences can help a student who is either over or under active become focused and attentive.

- sucking a pacifier, hard candy, using curly straws
- vibration - use a vibrating pillow, battery vibrating wiggle pen, toy massager
- proprioceptive activities - especially hanging, pushing, pulling or lifting heavy objects
- heavy chewing, blowing
- swimming
- adding rhythm to the activity
- being upside down

### **Alerting Techniques**

Alerting experiences can help a student who is under-reactive to sensory input, passive or lethargic become more focused and attentive. It is important to determine if the student is in a "shut down" mode in response to sensory defensiveness. If this is the case, alerting strategies should not be used. Alerting activities need to be closely monitored to prevent over stimulation.

- bright lighting and fresh, cool air
- fast swinging, quick unpredictable movement (bouncing on a ball, lap or mini trampoline)
- drink ice-water or carbonated drink
- cold water play, mist cool water from spray bottle on face
- crunchy chewing
- running - tag games, hide and seek, errands
- sitting on a ball chair, water mat or air pillow
- loud, fast music and sudden noises
- cause and effect toys with sounds and lights
- strong odours (perfume, peppermint, etc)
- visually stimulating rooms