

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 child 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 child 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 student
- firm pressure and skin to skin contact (squeezes to head, trunk, shoulders, hands)
- slow rocking or swaying - rocking chair, in adults lap or arms, on tummy in a head to heel direction (rhythmic motion)
- student uses palms to press together or against temples
- seeking out quiet area
- slow swinging- back and forth - in a blanket or rocking chair, swing
- lycra/spandex clothing
- neoprene vest
- weighted vest or collar (when prescribed by OT)
- lap "snake" (ask for instructions for making a lap snake)
- lavender, vanilla, banana or other soothing smells
- sucking
- hideout, fort or quiet corner
- fidget toys
- progressive muscle relaxation
- white noise or quiet music with a steady beat
- bear hugs (student faces away from you)
- hugging a teddy bear, giving self hugs, cuddling and warm backrubs
- finger hugs and rugs
- 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
- hanging from the hands
- 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
- crunchy chewing
- running - tag games, hide'n'seek, errands
- sitting on a ball chair, water mat or air pillow
- mist cool water from spray bottle on face
- loud, fast music and sudden noises
- cause and effect toys with sounds and lights
- strong odours (perfume, peppermint, etc..)
- visually stimulating rooms

If there are any questions or concerns, please speak with your occupational therapist regarding the use of these strategies.