

## CALMING IDEAS

Please keep in mind that these strategies are not specific to every child, not all children respond in the same way to sensory input. It is worth trialling some of these activities to determine what works best for the child. Carefully monitor the child's reaction to the following strategies, stop immediately if signs of distress or discomfort are displayed.

Calming activities can help children who are overly stimulated become focussed and attentive. Being in a calm alert state is the best way to learn and for some children they can find it difficult to remain calm in a classroom. These activities are particularly useful during transitions in the school day and a lot of them are great as a whole class activity! These activities can help a person to attend and focus, by calming and organising the sensory system.

### Proprioception

- Proprioceptive awareness is stimulated by weight-bearing and repetitive activity, which also increases muscle tone and strength. This can be carried out prior to activities involving concentration and fine motor control e.g. handwriting.
- Proprioception helps to “centre” a person - it helps the brain to either alert or calm by efficiently organising and making sense of information entering our sensory systems and can help a person to maintain a calm alert state throughout the day. Movement breaks and activities which involve resistance in the muscles and joints such as ‘Heavy work’ movement breaks can help to facilitate this.

### Heavy work and Deep pressure

- Activities that make the muscles work hard and against resistance
- Carrying heavy books and bags
- Pulling and pushing doors shut
- Pushing heavy trolleys
- Dragging furniture
- Games such as tug of war, wheelbarrow walks, crab walks, army crawls and pulling on Theraband
- Sandwich squashes between a bean bag and gym ball (lying on tummy)
- Hot dog rolls/sushi rolls (rolled up in a duvet/soft mat)
- Bear hugs



- Deep pressure massage or provide pressure by push through their shoulders for a few minutes at time
- Squeezing dough, theraputty or a stress ball
- Wall push ups
- Put hands in a clapping position and push as hard as you can against the other hand
- Clasp fingers in each hand try to pull the hands away from each other without the hands coming apart.
- Place hands underneath the chair try to pull up as hard as you can



### Other ideas

- Yoga movements
- Minimal use of bright colours, visual and tactile stimulus
- Use low level or dim lighting
- Fewer things on the walls and workstation, consider using softer pastel colours
- Creating a quiet corner or space i.e. Pop up tents, large box with cushions
- Use soft quiet music i.e. rain, white noise, nature sounds
- Use a soft voice and slow down your movements and speech
- Consider allowing children to use headphones when working
- Chewy and/or crunchy snacks i.e. dried mango, liquorice, biltong, carrot sticks, pretzels, bread sticks, sucking on hard sweets or drink through a straw
- Chores which involve resistance in the muscles and joints (carrying, lifting, pushing, pulling)

