











Calming Sensory Activities

What?	How?	
<p>Deep Pressure</p>	<p>Deep Pressure to muscles and joints is usually a calming sensory input, most often used as a calming technique. Some techniques include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Squeezy hug • Massage on the back, arms and legs • Pushing down on the shoulders • Squeezing hands or feet • Child under a heavy pillow, mat, etc. • Child climbing into a tight space, e.g., behind the couch, in a large box with cushions. • Child rolled up in a blanket like a hotdog. You can put pressure on their back to make the sauce. • Wrap child up in stretchy fabric, such as lycra. • Child lies between two pillows like a sandwich. Use pressure to put layers of “food” on the sandwich. • Palm pushing, where you and your child put your palms together (as in a high 5) and gently push each other. This allows your child to push as hard as they can on your hands, and you provide a safe resistance for their energy output. <p>It is important that you either wait for the child to ask for this input, or you join them at their level. Look at them and offer it, “Do you need a hug?” “Shall we make you a hamburger?”</p>	 
<p>Breathing</p>	<p>Breathing: Slow breathing is calming. When children take a deep breath in, hold it for a few seconds and then slowly blow out, it reduces the heart rate, triggers relaxation, and slows us down. Some breathing techniques include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belly breathing - Breath in deeply and blow your belly up like a balloon or give a toy a ride by laying on your back, put the toy on your belly and breath in deeply and inflate the belly to make the toy go up, then breath out slowly and make the toy come back down. • Blowing activities – bubbles, whistle party blowers, blowing a ping pong ball, blow a feather off your hand, blow through a straw. 	 

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Oral	<p>Oral: Children often find oral stimulation calming, putting things in their mouth a chewing. Some ideas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chewy/crunchy food • Biting on something rubbery (like a teether or vibrating teether) • Sucking on an icy pole • Drinking something thick through a straw • Chewing on cold food • Sucking 	
Reducing Sensory Input	<p>Reducing sensory input: Children sometime experience a sensory overload; they may be overly sensitive to sounds, sights, touch, smell or emotions. To help children calm down, they need these minimised, and we can do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try and go to a quieter place, and where possible avoid noisy situations and environments. • Have a dark tent or cubby they can retreat to • Use noise cancelling headphones. • Try not to use light touch with your child, this can be overwhelming for them. • Be aware if there are certain situations your child may not feel comfortable with. 	
Positive Feelings	<p>Positive Feelings: Give your child something that feels nice to focus on, a fiddle toy, comfort toy, heavy toy on their lap (deep pressure), music they love, a favourite story or book, sing action songs with them</p>	
Using you	<p>Using yourself and your voice in a calming 'regulating relationship': Staying calm yourself help your child to try and regulate themselves. Try to acknowledge how they are feeling and guide them back to a regulated emotional state:</p> <p>“I can see you're really upset; do you want a cuddle?” “I can see you're really angry, let's do some palm pushing” “I can see you're frustrated; do you want some help?”</p> <p>“Your heart is so fast, lets slow it down (with some deep breathing)”, “You are so hot, lets cool you down”, “You are so excited, lets calm you down”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember to use a calm, rhythmic and reassuring voice, and show that you understand they are not feeling good, and that it is ok to have these feelings; we just need to express them in an appropriate manner. • Also remember, do not ask questions, as in “what's wrong?” or “What do you want?”. In times of emotional stress and reactions children often do not know what is wrong or what they want, and this can inflame the situation. • Do not judge, direct or discipline the child, just 	

	<p>acknowledge what the child needs to feel better. When they are calm and settled, they may then be ready to change their behaviour.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you see your child becoming upset, agitated or overwhelmed sit with them quietly and just comment slowly on what they are doing. Don't ask questions, just comment on their actions "Oh you are putting the red one on the top, you are pushing very hard, now you have the blue one, you are lying on the floor..." This will make them feel supported and that you are interested in them, but without the challenge of having to respond to you. 	
What?	How?	
Heavy Work	<p>Heavy work: At time children need to do some big heavy muscle work to help their nervous system settle. Some activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trampoline Carrying heavy objects Pushing and pulling something heavy – a person or a rope in a tug-of-war activity, palm pushing Rolling, jumping or crashing on a crash mat (or couch) Doing wheelbarrow walks while you hold their feet. 	
What?	How?	
Calm Movements	<p>Calm movements: Regular, repeated rocking can be calming. Activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lying in a hammock (woven fabric hammocks feel nice and are inexpensive and easy to hang up). Lay on your tummy in the hammock and they can push themselves on the floor, or you can pull their hands. Two adults can swing a child in a blanket. It is important that the child does not feel out of control, that they can tell you if it feels ok or not, and if they want to continue or stop. Be mindful that spinning and swinging in many different directions can have a stimulating effect; this is not the desired outcome as you are trying to calm your child, not hype them up. 	

You will find a pattern of sensory calming activities that will fit your child's individual needs. In general children are more able to stay calm if they have regular calming and settling activities for their nervous system, roughly every 1.5 to 2 hours.