

Heavy work activities include:

Whole body actions involving pushing, pulling, lifting, playing, and moving

Oral actions such as chewing, sucking, and blowing

Use of hands for squeezing, pinching, or "fidgeting"

This resistive input obtained through heavy work activities is generally organizing and can improve attention, arousal level, body awareness and muscle tone, as well as decreasing defensiveness.

Proprioception is a form of sensory input to the muscles and joints which makes us aware of our "position in space" (i.e., where we are in relation to other objects or people). Children who have difficulty interpreting proprioceptive input have trouble grading and planning their movements and regulating their level of arousal.

You may see a child who accidentally breaks things often, appears clumsy and uncoordinated and may have an excessive need to crash and bump into objects, walls and people.

If they are seeking out excessive proprioceptive input, they are looking for a way to calm and organize their nervous system. They may seem disruptive, full of excessive energy, or even unsafe. These are the crashers, jumpers, movers, and shakers! These are the children we ABSOLUTELY want to target with heavy work activities. It WILL make a difference in them!

The following is an extensive list of heavy work activities/proprioceptive activities that may help regulate a child's arousal level, concentration, ability to fall asleep or sit still and attend to a task.

Keep in mind, the type of heavy work activities, timing and duration is most effective when directed by a professional (such as an Occupational Therapist) knowledgeable about this type of proprioceptive input.

It is also important to note which activities calm your child, arouse them, or over arouse them. This is very unique to each individual and must be observed and treated as such!

You want to choose activities THEY are interested in and that IMPROVE their state of arousal to its most functional point.

Gross Motor Activities

Carrying objects, such as...

groceries

animal backpacks

kids fanny pack

stacking or moving chairs/books

watering can/hose

baby's diaper bag

ANYTHING with weight to it

Wearing a weighted vest, weighted hat, or weighted shorts.

Wearing wrist or ankle weights

Using a weighted lap pad or weighted blanket

Swimming with or without swim weights

Pushing or pulling objects and activities, such as...

toy shopping cart

laundry basket

kids wagon

raise/lower flag at school

tug of war rope

rainbow putty press (flatten putty on wall or desk/table)

toy vacuum

mop/sweep floor with a mop, broom and dustpan for kids

wrestling

shoveling snow with a kids snow shovel

raking leaves, dirt etc. using a kid's wheelbarrow and Brio Garden Tools: rake, spade, shovel and broom

pushing/pulling self or others on a jumbo scooter board

Thera-Band

"push of war" between partners (with ball, have to cross over line)

riding bicycles / scooters

kids roller blades

Jumping and bouncing on/with items, such as...

on a trampoline

on an old mattress or soft area

into bean bag chairs
on a therapy ball (with adult assistance of course)
on a pogo stick
moon shoes
on a hopping ball
horseback riding
with a jump rope
foam hopscotch pads
ankle twister jump ropes
floor gymnastics
happy hop ball
on jumpolenes or backyard bouncers
Wheelbarrow walk relays

Potato sac/jumping bag races

Lizard crawl (belly on floor, push self with elbows)

Climbing/hanging on things, such as...

on jungle gyms/Geo-Dome

monkey bars

jungle climber with swings

hanging rings and trapeze

"Twizzler"

zipline/fun ride trolley

rock walls

outside on rocks or trees

up ladder and/or slide

climbing rope

climbing/cargo nets

Body Sox (TM) or a Super Shape Changer

Walking/running/playing in the sand

"Sandwich"/ Squishing activities...

make a child "sandwich" between floor pillows or cushions

roll child up in mat or heavy blanket as a "hot dog"

give child heavy blankets, weighted blankets, or sleeping bags (for children) at bedtime

bear hugs

firm towel dry after baths, wrap up tightly

roll an giant gym/exercise ball on top of them while they lay on the floor

Twister

Crabwalk (hands and feet on floor, belly up) games, such as...

relays

soccer

volleyball (in crabwalk position kicking balloon with feet in air)
(Click Here For Specific Gross Motor Activity Ideas For Toddlers)

Fine Motor/Upper Extremity Activities

Working at vertical surfaces (at/above eye level), such as...

with tabletop easels

erasing, coloring on chalkboard

painting/drawing on adjustable floor easel

washing windows

wipe down shower or tub

paint with water on side of house

Resistive tools or toys, such as...

clothespins

spray bottles

use curvy cut scissors to cut putty, play-doh, thick paper or cardboard

Play Doh Factory presses and molds

use rolling pins to flatten cookie dough/play-doh

color/draw with crayon on textured surface or rubbing plates

bingo/dot markers

paper punches

spray nozzle on garden hose

(Click Here For Tons Of Fine Motor Skills Activity Ideas And Products!)

Fidget or play with stretchy/squishy items, such as...

Theraputty (hide and seek with coins, tug of war, cut and flatten to make cookies, roll out to make letters, etc.)

play-doh (Check Out Recipes For Play Doh, Silly Putty, Paints And More)

The Silly Putty Store and The Crayola Store

rubber bands

Morf stress relief balls

relaxable squeeze balls

"squishies" (fill two balloons, inside each other, with flour or sand)

Resistive surfaces, such as...

sidewalk chalk on driveway/sidewalk/playground

color pictures taped over sandpaper

use sanding block to sand wood project

brush the family dog

Use weighted pens, pencils or utensils

Multi-person parachute games and activities

Cooking activities, such as...

stirring

pressing

kneading

Etch-a-Sketch with resistive knobs (shaking with both arms to clear screen)

Dig and play in the sand with a homemade toy backhoe , or with some cool beach and sandbox toys using sand and water tables or, wooden covered sandboxes

Oral Motor Activities:

Chewy foods such as...

dried fruit

gummi bears/worms etc.

licorice

beef jerky

bagels

cheese

granola bars

gum

raisins

taffy

soft pretzels

popcorn

Resistive sucking using items such as...

through thin curly straws/krazy straws

sports bottle with long straw

lollipops

popsicles

drink milkshake with a straw

hard candies

peanut butter

Blowing activities, such as...

wind instruments

bubbles

balloons

whistles/slide whistles

"snake"/blower party favors

make splatter paintings (use thin paint on paper... blow air through a straw and watch the paint move! can also use chocolate pudding thinned with milk on freezer paper)

Blopens

blow tropical fish bubbles in the bath

kazoos, whizzers, and other noise makers

