

Hello, I'm Katy the Claire House OT and I wanted to share some information and tips on my favorite topic: all things sensory 😊

Now that social distancing and self-quarantine are very real parts of our world right now, many children will be home for weeks to come without a real end date breaking their structure and routine and altering everything that they know and love.

Even more reduced opportunity for movement, lack of normal routine, increasing anxiety levels and loss of normal occupations (for a child this includes going to school, spending time with friends) will impact on their well being, ability to stay calm and increase any sensory challenges they may have.

Sensory based activities carried out at regular intervals throughout the day (for those with sensory challenges and those without) can help to calm the nervous system and help children and parents to feel grounded, secure and better equip to face the day. They help to provide much needed sensory input to sensory seekers and help to calm sensory sensitivities.

The list below of strategies and activities is by no means exhaustive but I hope it will give you an idea of some sensory based activities that are fun and can help your child to feel calmer and more in control of what is going on around them:

- ✓ Input through our muscles and joints through pushing, pulling, compression is called proprioceptive input and allows us to feel safe and secure and have good body awareness.
- ✓ Activities providing proprioceptive input can have a powerful calming and organising effect on the nervous system and can help to reduce sensory sensitivities and help us to feel regulated and calm.
- ✓ Activities which provide deep pressure firm touch rather than light, feathery touch can help children to feel more secure and in control of what is happening to them from a sensory point of view.
- ✓ Using firm deep touch rather than light feathery touch when drying your child after a bath or when applying creams
- ✓ Maintain a predictable routine as much as is possible and consider using a visual timetable, PECS or objects of reference

- ✓ Wearing snug/tight clothing like a sports base layer provides deep pressure tactile input which can have a calming effect. Have a look at Jett Proof clothing <https://jettproof.co.uk/>
- ✓ Drinking milk shakes or smoothies through a straw, sucking on a sports water bottle or eating chewy or crunchy foods gives resistance and therefore proprioceptive input through the jaw
- ✓ Encourage your child to lie on their tummy and prop through their arms to watch telly or colour in, great calming sensory input through the whole-body 😊
- ✓ Wearing head phones with no music or ear defenders can help those who are auditory sensitive or feeling overwhelmed
- ✓ Reducing noise and light levels at times during the day
- ✓ Allow lots of opportunity for movement break and position changes throughout the day
- ✓ Snuggling in a sleeping bag, bean bag or large pillows
- ✓ Lycra body socks provide a fun way of getting lots of calming proprioceptive input <https://www.sensorydirect.com/body-sock.html>
- ✓ Slow rocking or swinging on a rocking chair or swing (forward and back in a rhythmic way)
- ✓ Building a hideout or den or spending time in a quiet corner
- ✓ Using fidget toys
- ✓ High fives throughout the day (provides muscle input through the hands)
- ✓ Playing with toys which give resistance eg play doh, wet sand, tearing and scrunching paper, throwing and catching balls,
- ✓ Crawling activities eg crawling over cushions on the floor for an obstacle course
- ✓ Digging in the garden
- ✓ Pushing a dolls pushchair with heavy toys inside
- ✓ Pulling apart resistance toys/objects such as lego, duplo or stretchy toys
- ✓ Pounding and rolling play doh or salt doh, making shapes and finding hidden treasure (beads, mini toy animals or pulling out straws)

If anyone would like more general information on sensory processing and what can help please give me a shout and I will get back to you. Equally if anyone has any specific questions relating to their child let me know and I will help where I can too 😊

Here is a link to a great resource developed by Cardiff and vale university health board for supporting children with learning disabilities and ASD through Covid-19 isolation and contains information on many areas from structure and routine, sleep routines and managing behavior.

<http://www.cardiffandvaleuhb.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/1143/Supporting%20Children%20with%20LD%20&%20ASD%20with%20COVID%20Isolation.pdf>