

CALMING ACTIVITIES

1. Slow, Rhythmic, Repetitive Movements
 - Swinging
 - Rocking chair
 - Hammock
 - Rolling from back to side and back
 - Rocking on stomach
 - Rolling on large therapy ball
2. Pressure On The Skin
 - Brushing Techniques
 - Firm Deep Pressure and Squeeze on Arms and Legs
 - Vibration
 - Fidget Toys (putty, rubber bands, paper clips, balloons filled with flour)
3. Neutral Warmth
 - Warm Bath or Pool
 - Heated Rice Bags
 - Hot Water Bottle
 - Wrap up in Blanket or Sleeping Bag
4. Activities in Upside Down Postures
 - Hands and Knees Activities
 - Sitting in chair with head by knees
 - Hanging from Playground Bars
5. Joint Traction and Compression
 - Trampoline
 - Crawling, climbing, jumping, running
 - Manual compression or stretching
6. Total Body Activities and Heavy Work
 - Pushing, pulling, lifting heavy objects
 - Wearing weighted vest or backpack
 - Compression vest
 - Digging/shoveling, sand, dirt or snow
 - Skiing, skating, pulling others on sled
 - Pushing others on swing
 - Pushing/moving large balls
 - Wheelbarrow walks

Child's Name _____

Date _____

**CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM STATE
Classroom and Home Adaptations**

CREATING A CALMING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Purpose

To create a calming learning environment for the child who is easily overstimulated or has a high activity level

Suggestions

1. Reduce sensory stimulation.
2. Modify furniture.
3. Adapt the activity schedule.
4. Teach habits.

Reduce Sensory Stimulation

Reduce the amount, intensity, and variety of stimuli in the child's classroom and home work area.

1. Paint walls around the child's work area in cool colors (green, blue) with little contrast.
2. Remove posters, calendars, and other visual distractions from the walls around the work space.
3. Keep chalkboard clean. Erase all nonrelevant information completely.
4. Clear the work area of all materials except those that are in use. Keep other materials out of sight in closed shelves, cupboards, or closets.
5. Create a work area that is calm and quiet.
 - Close doors and windows during work periods to prevent extraneous sounds from entering the room.
 - Seat the child as far as possible from a window or door so that stimulation from outside noise, movement, and sights will be minimized.
 - Carpets on floors and walls can significantly reduce noise level.
6. Use a study carrel to block out visual stimulation from the classroom. Cardboard shields are available commercially and can be placed around the child's work area, or classroom furniture and room dividers can be arranged to create a visually calm space.

7. Encourage the child to use the same work area consistently so the child becomes accustomed to the area and associates it with quiet activity time.
8. At home, locate the child's work area in a den, study, or other quiet room. Do not locate the work area in the bedroom, which contains many distractions and is associated with sleep or play.
9. Speak to the child in slow, even tones. Avoid unnecessary words when providing instructions or helping to calm the child for activity.
10. Children tend to be restless in a cold room. Maintain the room temperature at 68 to 76 degrees for optimal learning ability.

Modify Furniture

1. If the child moves constantly and rocks the chair, attach triangular pieces of wood to the back of the chair to prevent it from rocking backward or tipping over.
2. Attach a carpet square or piece of rubber matting to the chair seat to decrease excess movement that interferes with fine motor performance.
3. Create a desk fence by attaching a 1" to 2" wooden edge to the front and sides of the desk, so the child doesn't push materials onto the floor.

Adapt the Activity Schedule

1. Devise errands that involve physical activity for times when the child's energy level is high, or to be used between desk activities. Cleaning up or passing out materials for classroom activity, bringing notices to the office, and cleaning the chalkboard are examples of constructive ways to divert excess energy.
2. Movement helps some children to divert excess energy. When unable to remain calm in the classroom, the child might go outside and run back and forth between two points as many times as possible in a five-minute period, or jump up and down for a few minutes before attempting to relax and begin a desk activity.
3. Notice whether the child has difficulty with overarousal at a regular time within the daily schedule. If so, schedule a "slow-down" period at that time, during which the child takes a "movement break" or practices self-calming for a few minutes before beginning the next activity.
4. Present activities in a consistent manner, without sudden changes. When a change in schedule or instructions for an activity must occur, prepare the child and provide extra support for dealing with the transition. Make the change in small steps, if possible.

Teach Habits

1. Teach the child some self-calming strategies. Some children calm themselves by using progressive relaxation, mental imagery, deep breathing, closing eyes and sitting quietly, or listening to quiet, slow, rhythmic music.
2. Teach the child to anticipate difficulty with transition periods (for example, calming self for desk work after gym class or recess) and to use self-calming strategies. After coming in from recess, the child might be allowed a short period to sit in a beanbag chair in the reading corner with eyes closed, breathing deeply.
3. Encourage the child to keep the desk clear of materials that are not being used, and to keep the desk contents organized in boxes and piles.
4. Teach the child to seek out a quiet, nonstimulating place for concentrating. Encourage the child to recognize the need for decreased stimulation and to speak up when the classroom or home environment is uncomfortably loud or distracting.

Use of these activities should be directed by a qualified therapist.

Child's Name _____

Date _____

CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM STATE
Classroom and Individual Practice
TOTAL BODY INHIBITION

Purpose

To achieve total body inhibition for calming, focusing, or decreasing muscle tone before fine motor activity

Materials

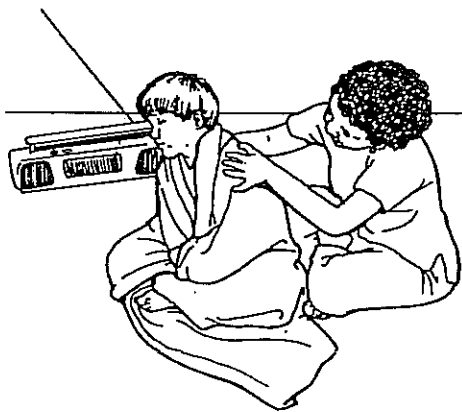
Cotton blanket, carpeted area or mat, relaxing music (slow, regular rhythm), and tape or record player

Preparation

Turn lights off or to low level of intensity. Child drapes blanket over shoulders and around body before instructions are given and stays "wrapped" during this activity. Some children can relax more easily with eyes closed. Use soft, slow, even speech to instruct the child.

Position

Child stands or sits comfortably on carpet or mat. Adult stands or sits behind child.



Procedure

1. Place your hands on child's shoulders and rock child gently, back and forth or from side to side, to the rhythm of the music.
2. When child can move with the rhythm independently, release your hold and allow child to continue swaying slowly and regularly with the music.
3. Child continues to sway gently for 5 to 10 minutes, or until desired relaxation is achieved. If tired of the movement, child can lie quietly and listen to the music.
4. When child is calm and relaxed, remove blanket, turn lights up, and present fine motor activity. Continue to speak in slow, even tones. Start with large, fluid movements that can be performed to the rhythm of the music.

Desired Response

Child becomes calmer and more relaxed.

Undesired Response

Child's behavior becomes more disorganized, or tone increases.

Variations and Adaptations

Child sits in adult's lap (facing away from adult) while adult rocks slowly and regularly in sitting position on the floor, in rocking chair, or on swing.

Any use of neutral warmth and slow, repetitive, regular movement is calming. Examples of this kind of activity include:

- Child swings in a hammock or net swing.
- Child is passively rolled from back to side and back by an adult.
- Child rolls independently, back and forth slowly.
- Children dance slowly, with limp bodies and eyes closed.
- Child rocks slowly in rocking chair.
- Child lies on stomach over therapy ball while adult supports child at the hips and rocks child slowly back and forth, side to side, or in small circles.

This activity can be done in the classroom when the activity or excitement level gets too high.

Caution

Do not use this technique with children who are hypotonic (have low muscle tone) or hypoactive (have a low activity level).

Observe child carefully during this activity to monitor its effects, and stop when the desired result is achieved. Monitor behavior afterward to ensure that stimulation is not causing a "rebound" effect of greater disorganization or increased tone when the inhibiting activity is discontinued.

If movement or music is too fast or irregular, these same activities can stimulate the child and increase tone. Be sure that you are encouraging slow, regular stimulation, and that you are promoting the result you want.

Use of these activities should be directed by a qualified therapist.

Calming Activities

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prepared and expanded by Kayleen R. Hall, MS, OTR

**Not all of these 'recipes' for calming will be effective with every child. Each nervous system has its own unique way of interpreting input. Discuss options with the parents as they will provide insights to activities the child enjoys or uses already. The astute observers and/or evaluator will be able to discriminate quickly which types of activities will produce the needed calming affect and provide pleasure.

Environmental Strategies

1. Having lights dimmed may be calming. Whenever possible use natural light. Full spectrum lighting can be beneficial.
2. Be aware of environmental synthetics. Such as fibers in carpets, wallpaper, equipment, bedding and clothing.
3. Hypersensitive children may react negatively to odors such as perfume, air fresheners, markers, paint, etc.
4. Hypersensitive children may be overwhelmed by TV and movies. Fast action, violence and loud unexpected movements may be alerting to children.
5. Music can be alerting (rock, marches) or calming (environmental, natural, single instrument, and baroque).

Activities designed for calming children

The adult should always approach the child from the front. It may be helpful to explain what is going to happen and encourage their participation and choice of activities. Avoid doing calming techniques to a child; rather gain some acceptance of the activities used.

1. Chewing is calming. Children can safely chew ice chips, aquarium tubing, some thera tubing and infant chew toys. Sugarless gum and waterbottle straws at older ages are helpful.
2. Slow stroking on the child's back may be calming. Start at the nape of the neck and stop at the top of the hips. As one hand finishes the other begins the stroke. Repeat if calming for up to three minutes.
3. Teach the child some pressure points.
 - a. Push in gently on the area between the upper lip and the nose.
 - b. Push down gently on the top of their head with both hands.
 - c. Some students benefit from standing at their desk with hands flat on the table and lean weight on their arms and hands. This can be done up against a wall too.

4. Some children find being wrapped in ace bandages comforting. Be careful not to wrap too tightly and compromise circulation. Other children find it easier to sleep in a size smaller of thermal underwear- provides pressure all night long.

5. Deep pressure can be provided many ways- Once the child is in a pressure posture he/she can listen to music, read or be read to and/or the therapist can rock the child gently pushing at the shoulder and hip.

- a. While the child is inside of a barrel or box, wedge pillows, foam pads around the child.
- b. Have the child roll up tightly inside a blanket or two. (hot dog game)
- c. The sandwich game can be played by stacking foam pads, pillows, blankets and bean bag chairs on the child.
- d. An in-class strategy may be to use a weighted pillow in the child's lap or a weighted snake shaped bean bag over their shoulders.

6. Vibration can be calming for children. There are a variety of toys and equipment that vibrate. The vibrating pillow, variety of vibrators for massage, the vibrating tube or snake, bumble ball, toothbrushes, etc. These can be combined with bean bag chairs, the hot dog or sandwich games.

7. Head down positions may be calming.

- a. Using a large gym ball or barrel with the child prone or supine, the therapist controls at the hips while the student engages with a simple puzzle on the floor or uses a flashlight on the ceiling.
- b. Encourage the child to lie with their head over the end of a couch.

8. Some touch activities may be calming.

- a. Playing in cool water looking for certain objects (dish scrubbies, suction cup soap holders, smooth and rough toys) can be quieting.
- b. Rubbing on lotion after washing or bathing using downward continuous strokes may be effective.
- c. When the child is willing to sit in your lap, encourage them to sit so his/her back is against your chest, then press lightly down on their head with your hands in somewhat even rhythmical motions. The neutral warmth and rhythmic pressure can help the child to feel more organized.
- d. Brushing with a surgical scrub brush may be effective for calming some children. This technique was developed by Pat Wilbarger, OTR.
 1. Brush the child's back, arms, hands, legs and feet, avoid the face and stomach.
 2. Apply compression from elbow to shoulder, wrist to elbow, then fingers and thumb. May also do legs, knee to hip, ankle to knee, and toes.
 3. Press down on shoulders and head each ten times.
 4. Have child jump in place ten times.

Pre-referral Interventions for Classroom Difficulties

The following interventions should be attempted for several weeks (4-6) before referring a student for an occupational and/or physical therapy evaluation.

Sensory processing difficulties (relates to Hearing, Social/Emotional, and Motor domains)

- Use a timer or a picture schedule to help with transitions. Also letting the child know ahead of time when a transition will occur or when there will be a change in routine is helpful.
- If a child becomes over-stimulated by the classroom environment, allow a break from the environment (deliver a blank note to the office or to another teacher) or provide a quiet space within the classroom where the child can "regroup."
- For children who are sensitive to touch, allow them to stand at the beginning or end of a line, rather than standing in the middle. Allow the child to have extra space at circle time or when working in groups.
- During art activities, respect the child who is sensitive to touch.
- Forewarn the child who is sensitive to noise of any loud noises before they occur.
- Chewing gum or sucking on hard candy, as permitted in the school, may help the child remain calm and focused while performing seated work.

cog/behav
hyperactive
-off task