SENSORY CIRCUITS

A PRACTICAL WORKSHOP FOR STAFF AND PARENTS

January 2023

Sensory circuits (Intro and aims)

- This OT-led practical session will enable you to find out:
- What is a sensory circuit?
- How can sensory circuits help?
- Which activities are alerting, organising and calming?
- How to set up a sensory circuit.

Why use a sensory circuit?

We all process information we receive through our senses all day, everyday.

Sensory circuits can help the brain to process this sensory information so that the person can understand the world around them and respond appropriately to their environment.

What is a sensory circuit?

- Sensory circuits are a series of activities that alert, organise and calm a child.
- Sensory circuits can be used for whole classes or individual children as part of their daily routine.

How can sensory circuits help?

Sensory circuits can enable a child to reach a ‘just right’ level of alertness to engage in their daily activities.

The activities used in a sensory circuit help the child to organise and regulate their senses.

Sensory circuits are most effective when they are used on a regular basis as part of a child’s daily routine.

Which activities are alerting, organising and calming?

- **Alerting activities:**

Running; jumping; dancing; star jumps etc.

- **Organising activities:**

Obstacle courses; walking along a line or bench; balancing etc

- **Calming activities:**

Breathing exercises; guided meditation; wall press ups; deep pressure activities e.g. or rolling exercise ball over legs or body.

Alerting Activities

These provide proprioceptive (awareness of the position and movement of the body) and vestibular (balance) stimulation within a controlled environment.
Example activities: Running; jumping; dancing; star Jumps

Grading the activity:

1. Keep it simple.
2. Add 1 extra component to the original activity.
3. Add more components to the original activity.

Grading an alerting activity example:

Skipping:

1. Increase the amount of turns on the rope.
2. Increase the speed and length of time without stopping.
3. Cross arms, join/hands

Organising Activities

These activities involve balance, timing and sensory motor processing. They help to developing attention and focus. The child has to organise their body, plan their approach and do multiple tasks at once in a sequential order.

Example activities:

- Simons says;
- Obstacle course;
- Walk along a bench;
- Balance a beanbag on head;
- Throwing and catching.

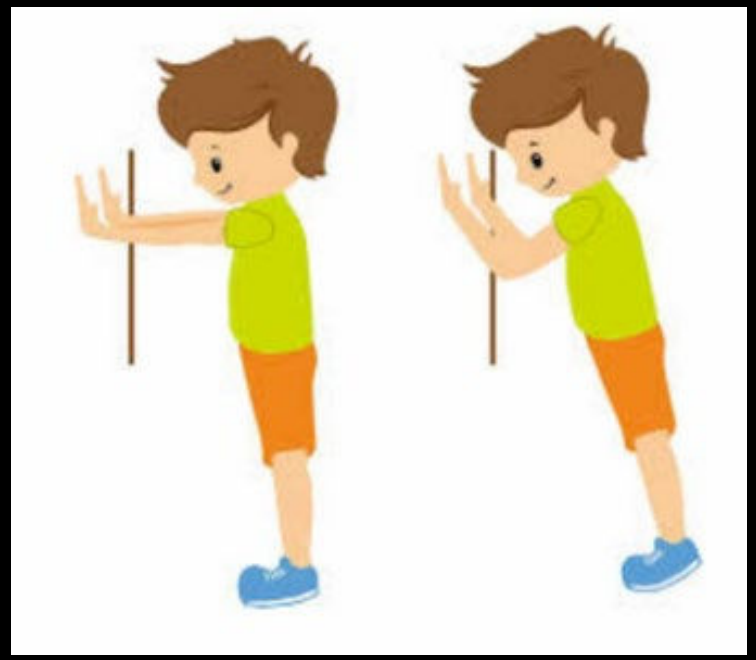
Grading an organising activity:

1. Keep it simple.
2. Add 1 extra component to the original sequence.
3. Add more components to the original sequence.

Calming activities

These help the children to feel calm, centred and ready for upcoming activities by providing them with calming sensory input.

Example activities:
Breathing exercises;
Guided meditation;
Wall press ups;
Rolling exercise ball over legs or body;
Squashing between cushions



Grading the activity:

1. Keep it simple.
2. Add 1 extra component to the original activity
3. Add more components to the original activity.

How to set up a sensory circuit

- Consider the space you have (in the classroom or at home).
- Consider the needs of you child/children.
- Which of the ‘three elements’ (alerting, calming, organising) do they need most?
- What equipment will you need?
- Are there simple practical resources you already have which you could use – e.g. everyday objects such as cushions or blankets for calming activities, or pathways across your kitchen floor for organising etc?
- Do you need to use visuals with your child?

Sensory circuit – practical session (30 minutes)

Take 10 minutes in each of the following areas:

Alerting

Organising

Calming

Feedback and questions

HOW WERE THE SENSORY CIRCUIT ACTIVITIES FOR YOU?

WHICH ACTIVITIES MIGHT YOU BEGIN TO USE AT HOME OR IN THE CLASSROOM?

ANY QUESTIONS?