

Sensory and Movement Activities

Sensory breaks help children de-stress, reset, and re-center and also help children solidify what they learn. Any activity that immerses children in their environment is a sensory break. These activities are great for virtual learning but also anytime children need a reset.

Body Awareness Activities: When children engage in Heavy Work the push, pull and pressure is calming and the motion is alerting. Heavy work activities involve:

- ❖ Push or stack chairs
- ❖ Squeeze stress balls or fidget toys
- ❖ Push a wheelbarrow with blocks, sand etc.
- ❖ Dig in the sandpit.
- ❖ Ride a bike.
- ❖ Row, row, row your boat – push and pulling arm actions, rhythmic hand claps whilst singing songs.
- ❖ Obstacle course, jumping, foot stomping, animal walks.
- ❖ Dancing, yoga poses
- ❖ Tossing and catching bean bags
- ❖ Rolling on a large gym ball.
- ❖ Swing, belly on saddle swing.
- ❖ Bear hug, back rub, shoulder rub or tap.

These activities can be very regulating for children who have high energy levels. For more information visit- <https://theinspiredtreehouse.com>

Movement Activities: A movement break doesn't need to be long - usually 3 - 5 minutes of activity is enough. So, to maximise the benefit from a break, movement activities should be at hand before commencing. Supporting activities include

- ❖ Sitting on a sensory cushion, Fidget Toys in a box.
- ❖ Push your feet into a TheraBand placed around chair legs.
- ❖ Deep Breathing, bubble wrap, slime, playdough, blowing bubbles.
- ❖ Sitting in a rocking chair when reading or during floor time.
- ❖ Wobble board
- ❖ Star jumps, wall presses, crab walks, body twists.
- ❖ Stretch, deep breathing
- ❖ Water play with ice.

For further ideas -Sensory Breaks for Kids - <https://lemonandlimeadventures.com>

Tactile Sensory Strategies: Children with a tactile style of intelligence process information best when it is mediated through touch and texture. Children's attention skills can be supported by:

- ❖ Using manipulatives and hands-on materials for play and learning, threading beads, construction, hammering, following pattern making card tasks.
- ❖ Combining learning materials with tactile bins, like digging for treasure or magnets in a bin filled with sand or dry rice.
- ❖ Allowing children to hold in their hands or play with fidget toys when they may need to listen or pay attention for extended periods of time.
- ❖ Allowing children to take tactile sensory breaks that provide deep pressure through bear hugs, with cuddles pillows or beanbag chairs; they can also be allowed to play with tactile materials like play dough and shaving cream.

Oral Motor Activities: Certain smells, tastes, and textures have been associated with more attentive behaviour in children. Some children may focus better when their sense of smell and taste are engaged. Various ways of using oral input might be by:

- ❖ Sipping water through a water bottle, add ice.
- ❖ Eat different textured foods – carrots, apples, nuts, crackers or dry cereal.
- ❖ Meditation and mindfulness all involve teaching children to be aware of their bodies, breathing and surroundings including - blowing bubbles, blowing small pompoms or light objects with a straw, blow up balloons, chewy toy, suck on ice blocks, roll tongue in a circle, whistle or hum a song or make sss or zzz sounds.
- ❖ Frequent food and drink breaks

Breathing Exercises -Coping Skills for Kids <https://copingskillsforkids.com.au>

Oral Motor Activities <http://www.andnextcomesL.com> - <https://theinspiredtreehouse.com>

Visual Activities: When children are required to focus on visual activities like such story/group time, some children tend to lose interest. A few visual sensory strategies to boost attention could be:

- ❖ Look at discovery bottles, glitter bottles.
- ❖ Read I Spy Books or play I Spy.
- ❖ Read.
- ❖ Paint with different types of paint and brushes.
- ❖ Free colour.
- ❖ Colour patterns.
- ❖ Make shadow puppets.

Auditory: Listening to quiet music can assist children to calm. Using headphones can be used to block out overwhelming noise or to retreat from an overwhelming environment. Using music and songs with a strong beat encourages regulation. Tapping the beat on the child's arm or back can also be regulating. Marching and action songs assist children to organise their bodies.

Relaxing meditation exercises visit – <https://www.waterford.org>

Useful Resources

<https://www.gateways.com.au/services/pre-school-inclusion-services/early-childhood-educators-library>

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk>