

# Advice sheet

## Using my Senses – Body Awareness

### Helping your Child's Body Awareness: Things to Do

Awareness of the body comes from sensations from the muscles and joints. The term proprioception is often used to refer to this sensory system. This system gives us the ability to know where each part of our body is and how it is moving through space without looking. Integration of this information enables children to execute gross and fine motor activities that require subtle changes in posture, force, strength and dexterity.

### Children with poor body awareness or proprioception may have the following difficulties:

- Needing to rely on visual information to move through space and therefore may not be able to move properly if they cannot see where their arms and legs are
- Poor awareness of their position in space, in relation to objects and people so may be clumsy and always bumping into things
- May break toys or press too hard or softly with pencils because they are unable to grade how much pressure to use
- Delayed fine motor skills due to a lack of sensory awareness of the tools in their hands
- Always be 'on the go'.
- Have difficulty throwing and catching
- Have poor balance
- Take ages to learn how to swim or ride their bike.

### Activities that may help:

- **Play dough** - playing with firm play dough, clay or plasticene. Squeeze, pull, stretch, roll and cut it. Pinch the dough with individual fingers and thumb. Make peas and squash them.
- **Obstacle course** - set up an obstacle course that involves climbing over, under, through and round, etc. Use cushions, cardboard boxes, duvets, chairs, skittles, etc. Encourage the child to describe what they are doing using spatial language e.g. through, over etc.
- **Pushing and pulling games** - Tug-of-war or Row Row the Boat.
- **Animal Walks** - pull yourself along on your tummy like a seal, wriggle along like a worm, walk like a crab, walk like a bear on hands and feet with your bottom raised.
- **Physical play** - play on swings, ropes, monkey bars and bouncing on a space ball or trampoline. Swimming, rough and tumble, climbing, gymnastics.
- **Wheelbarrow walks** - do wheelbarrow walks around the room and around obstacles. You may have to hold the child's thighs or hips initially but gradually reduce your support until you are holding only your child's ankles. See how long your child can maintain this position and how far they can go.

### Activities that may help:

- At home have the child assist with carrying shopping, pulling and pushing the vacuum cleaner, carrying toy box.
- In nursery, a child can be a "teacher's helper" by putting books away, carrying boxes/bags of toys or other equipment, or moving chairs for activities
- Digging in sand or small gravel and carrying buckets of sand/gravel/water.
- Cooking, stirring cake mixture, rolling out pastry etc.

### Body Awareness: What you can do

1. Build in movement to all learning, these children need to move to learn. Incorporate breaks in activities so the child can get up and move, run an errand or do some brain gym etc.

2. The child does not always need to be seated for table top tasks. Try activities whilst lying on tummy, in high or half kneeling and standing at a table as these positions will help to improve body awareness and provide more proprioception.
3. Prepare the child's sensory system prior to fine motor activity by providing a brief period of group aerobics e.g. jumping on the spot, circle arms, push hands together, wiggle fingers
4. Present prewriting activities on a vertical surface using a chalk board, easel, white board or paper taped to the wall. This promotes improved upper limb awareness.
5. Trial adapted scissors and pen grips



Easi grip scissors



soft pencil grip

6. Children with poor proprioception tend to fidget and move a lot in order to produce the sensation to "feed" himself/herself in order to attend. Trial a 'move n sit' cushion to increase awareness of posture whilst sitting. Try using a carpet square to define a space for Carpet Time.



Move n Sit cushion

### Good Body Awareness and Proprioceptive Skills: What you can do

- **Let them fiddle** just find an appropriate way to let them. A range of fiddlers are available that can even be used in the classroom including things they can chew.
- **Try to understand from their perspective** remember what it was like learning to drive a car, having to look to find the pedals and controls, not being able to change gear without looking at the gearstick?
- **Read their cues** if they are restless, get them up and moving.
- **Keep encouraging them** whether they are successful or not. If they get frustrated, try and make the task easier to keep their confidence to keep trying.
- **Work on grasp and hand strength** through fine motor activities; go to Using our Hand Info sheet.

**For range of supplier see website link**