

Heavy play ideas...

Proprioceptive input tends to have a calming and organising effect on the body, particularly when feeling overstimulated or overwhelmed. Any activity which involves “heavy work” such as pushing or pulling provides input to the proprioceptive sensory system. When children participate in these types of activities we often see them become calmer and more organised in their behaviour, and able to follow through with daily activities such as getting dressed, participating in meal time, and following directions.

- Try different animal walks: Bear walks, crab walks, snake crawls (on belly), frog jumps
- Do turtle walks: Place a large pillow on the child’s back and see how long they can crawl around with a “heavy shell” on their back
- March or jog in place while stomping
- Do push-ups either against a wall or on a mat or carpet
- Push the doorway: Stand in the doorway and push against the sides of it as hard as possible with one arm on each side. See how many seconds they can push.
- Tug-of-war: Can be done in a variety of positions such as standing, sitting, kneeling, or laying on tummy
- Play with weighted balls (but be careful)
- Play on the monkey bars or a single bar for hanging
- Pour items such as sand, dry beans, dry rice, or water back and forth between containers (larger containers = more heavy work)
- Cut the bottom off an empty milk jug and use as a heavy work scooper for water, sand, rice, beans, etc.
- Dig in a sandbox (use scoopers or hunt for buried items)
- Squeeze, squish, and smash play dough
- Play with sand mixed with baby oil
- Rip thick paper or pieces of cardboard
- Play catch with a big pillow or ball
- Complete an obstacle course or relay race
- Ride a bike or scooter – try tying a tyre or load to the back to pull
- Build a fort (include chairs and large pillows for extra heavy work while constructing)
- Lay on tummy while reading, doing a puzzle or a drawing
- Dig in a garden/Push a wheelbarrow
- Carry heavy loads of books, a bucket of blocks, or pail/bucket/large bottle of water
- Pull a cart with rocks, grocery bags, or sibling/friend in it (if can do so safely)
- Wear a weighted backpack or use a weighted lap toy when sitting
- Heavy ‘jobs’ – ie: putting boxes away, tidying the chairs...

