



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



Child Development
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Sensory Circuits

Activity Ideas



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What is Sensory Circuits?

Participation in a sensory circuit is a great way to both energise and settle children into the school day. The initial aim of the group is to support children to be in the optimum state of alertness, ready for learning (Horwood, 2008).

The circuit is based on theories of sensory processing and sensory integration. Sensory integration is the process by which the brain organises and filters all the information received from the senses (Ayres 2006). Sensation feeds the developing brain in order for the body and mind to be directed in purposeful way.

Longer term benefits can include:

- Improvements in self-esteem
- Development of physical skills
- Differences in focus and attention and improved ability to settle down
- Some quiet, unresponsive children appear to have 'woken up' and are more readily engaging with other children in their class
- Improved communication skills for children working at all levels and with a variety of additional needs

How does the sensory circuit work?

The sensory circuit structure is simple. The circuit runs in three sections based on theories of sensory processing and sensory integration. The order of the circuit is extremely important: 1) Alerting section; 2) Organising section and 3) Calming section.

(The circuit ends on calming activities as we don't want a child to end feeling hyperactive.)

Alerting activities:

The aim is to provide vestibular stimulation (providing the brain with sensory information every time the position of the head moves in relation to gravity) within a controlled environment. This prepares the brain for learning and for the demands of the school environment.

Alerting activities include skipping, running and jumping jacks.

Jog on the spot



Jumping Jacks



Trampoline



Kick like a donkey



Organising activities:

This includes activities that require the child to organise their body, plan their approach and do more than one thing at a time in a set sequential order. These are skills that may increase a child's focus, attention span and performance within the classroom.

Organising activities include climbing, balancing, and throwing.

Balance- walk along a line

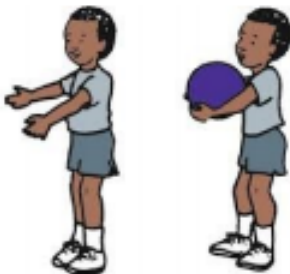


Log Roll



1. Lie on back
2. Place arms outstretched above head with legs straight.
3. Twist to roll over onto stomach in either direction.

Throw and catch games



Balance- stand on one foot



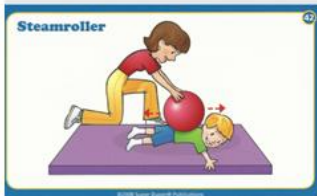
Calming activities:

The calming activities provide input to ensure that as the children leave the circuit they are calm and ready for the task ahead.

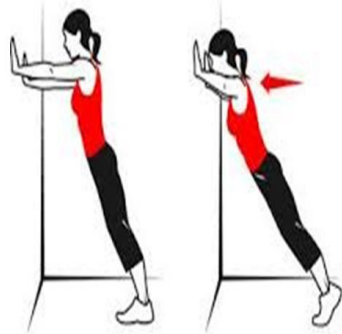
Calming activities include: press-ups, crawling exercises or an exercise ball squash.

Ball squash

1. Take off shoes.
2. Lie on tummy on a mat/carpet.
3. Roll the rapy ball over you, starting at the top of back all the way down to toes.
4. Repeat. Never roll the head.



Wall Presses



Curl up into a ball



Commando crawl



References:

- Horwood, Jane (2008). Sensory Circuits—A Sensory motor skills programme for children.
- Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust- "Sensory Motor Circuits- A sensory Motor Skills Programme for Children" booklet:
<https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/docs/default-source/leaflets---sensory-strategy-leaflets--april-2015/0218---sensory-circuits---info-for-teachers---april-2018.pdf?sfvrsn=8>