

Introduction

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. Body awareness can be developed when muscles and joints are working against gravity or resistance or “heavy work”.

Children with poor body awareness 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 gauge how much pressure to use.
- Delayed fine motor skills due to a lack of sensory awareness of the tools in their hands.

Activities

- **Play dough**

Playing with firm play dough, clay or plasticine. Squeeze, pull, stretch, roll and cut it. Pinch the dough with individual fingers and thumb.

- **Obstacle course**

Set up an obstacle course that involves climbing over, under, through and round, etc. Use cushions, cardboard boxes, duvets, air beds, skittles, etc. Encourage the child to describe what they are doing using spatial language e.g. through, over etc.

- **Pushing and pulling games**

Encourage the child to try and propel their body across a smooth floor on their tummy using their arms and hands only. Play push and pull games such as pulling a wagon filled with toys, “tug-of-war”, playfully try to push a wall down or parents over. Row-row the boat.

- **Outdoor play**

Play on swings, ropes, monkey bars and bouncing on a hopper ball.

- **Arms away games**

Practice activities where the arms are: above the head – e.g. passing a ball away from the body – e.g. carrying a tray.

- **Sensory play**

Digging in sand that is wet or small gravel, carrying buckets of sand/gravel/water.

- **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.

- **Curl ups**

Ball position – the child lies on his back and pulls legs, arms, and head forward to curl up into a ball and hold for as long as possible.

- **Balloon tennis**

Play balloon tennis with a rolled up piece of paper.

- **Everyday activities**

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.

Strategies

- Give clear boundaries and encourage the child to tell you what they are doing.
- Before they use a piece of equipment ask them to tell you what they are going to do. These children may often need close supervision as they may not be safety aware.
- Use activities that have movement but give addition sensory information about where the body is in space e.g. deep pressure through their feet and legs whilst jumping on a trampoline.
- Movement activities may enhance the child's ability to focus and learn so try to allow child to have plenty of movement activities prior to a focused or fine motor activity.
- Don't expect the child to maintain focus and maintain attention for long periods, allow the child to get up and move around.

Frequency of activities

Engage the child with activities from this programme for up to 15 minutes for 3 focused sessions a week. Simply adjusting your current activities and encouraging the child's participation in activities they would not usually not normally choose will support development.

Complete activities from this sheet for 3 months

Improving our service

We continue to review our service to make sure that it meets the needs of those who are using it. We would appreciate any suggestions on how we may improve and also comments on what was good about the service.

If you have any compliments, suggestions or complaints, please write to or contact any member of staff in the first instance, or to the Occupational Therapy Service Lead if necessary.

Contact details: see part 1 of pack



USING MY SENSES

Movement

Early Years Activity Sheet

**PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES**