

A Guide to Sensory Circuits

What are sensory circuits?

Sensory circuits are physical activities that help to alert, organise and then relax the senses of children so that they are ready to take part in activities and one-to-one work.

Participating in a short sensory motor circuit is a great way to alert or calm children to settle them into and throughout the day.

A sensory circuit needs to incorporate the 3 stages;

Alerting, Organizing and Calming

For children with low arousal, you will concentrate mainly on alert and for children who are highly aroused, concentrate on the calming activities.

AIM:

- To focus concentration on readiness for the days learning.
- Encourage the development of sensory processing skills.
- Help with progression in self-regulating arousal levels.
- Help to develop sensory motor difficulties (including praxis).

Who will a Sensory Circuit Help?

Sensory circuits will help anyone that presents with any of these behaviors and difficulties:

- Fidgeting and changing position a lot.
- Slow to start work and missing verbal cues (needs alerting)
- Difficulty organising themselves
- Lethargic (needs alerting)
- Poor coordination & balance
- Known sensory processing difficulties (requires help with regulating these)
- Rocking
- Poor attention and concentration

Examples of some equipment that can be found at home

- Skipping rope
- Trampette / Trampoline
- Yoga mats
- Beanbags
- Gym ball/Peanut ball
- Fidget toys
- Aiming and throwing floor activity
- Dance sack / Pillow case
- Mats
- Weighted blankets

Alerting Activities

The aim of the alerting activities is to provide VESTIBULAR and PROPRIOCEPTIVE input to make the child more aroused and ready for learning.

Vestibular

Vestibular input is the sense of movement, centered in the inner ear. Any type of movement will stimulate the vestibular receptors, but spinning, swinging, and hanging upside down provide the most intense, longest lasting input. DO NOT add a lot of vestibular activities if the child struggles with excessive movement.

Here are a few examples of vestibular activities you could put into a sensory circuit:

- Trampoline/ trampette
- Space hopper.
- Climbing equipment.
- Scooters / scooter boards.
- Jumping on spot.
- Running / shuttle runs.
- Core ball.
- Yoga.

Proprioceptive

Proprioceptive input (sensations from joints, muscles and connective tissues that underlie body awareness) can be obtained by lifting, pushing, and pulling heavy objects, including your own weight. A child can also stimulate the proprioceptive sense by engaging in activities that push joints together like pushing something heavy or pull joints apart like hanging from monkey bars.

Here are a few examples of proprioceptive activities you could put into a sensory circuit:

- Squashed under cushions/ large bean bags.
- Weighted equipment (backpack / lap pad / blankets).
- Medicine ball (bouncing / skittles).
- Tearing cardboard boxes for recycling.
- Ball cushion
- Weighted target game
- Step ups

ANY VESTIBULAR ACTIVITY SHOULD BE FOLLOWED BY A PROPRIOCEPTIVE ACTIVITY

Organising Activities

The aim of these activities is to provide challenges involving multi-sensory processing, for example balancing and moving, throwing, and balancing.

Here are a few examples of organising activities that could be put into a sensory circuit:

- Log roll (proprioception)
- Balance obstacle course (proprioceptive & vestibular & tactile)
- Rolling ball (proprioception)
- Hand over hand pull (Proprioceptive & vestibular)
- Simon says sequences (proprioceptive & vestibular & tactile)
- Wobble board (vestibular)

All of these activities provide sensory input, whilst also providing help with praxis

Calming Activities

The aim of calming activities is the most important. The calming activities provide input to ensure that as children finish the circuit, they are calm and centered and ready for the day as possible. If a child is partaking in a sensory circuit due to being under-aroused, then do not complete too many calming activities otherwise this will reduce their arousal levels again.

Here are a few examples of calming activities that could be put into a sensory circuit:

- Rolling gym ball on back and limbs
- Use of different fidget toys/toys of differing textures
- Press ups
- Push or Pull
- Planks
- Dance Sack / Pillow case