

Heavy Work Activities for Parents

Heavy work activities (like pushing, pulling or carrying a load) provide proprioceptive input. This inner sensory input tells the brain how the muscles and joints are working, and releases feel-good hormones that calm and relax. This can help with attention to task and self-regulation. These activities can be performed daily to help with calming during times of difficult behavior, and/or during homework breaks to help with attention.

- Squeeze hands into fists, or press hands together hard at the midline of the body
- Give lots of high 5's!
- Push against the wall with hands (trying to push the wall down) or with back to wall pushing with legs
- Press feet into floor either in standing or seated in a chair
- Do chair push-ups, using hands pushing down on seat to push body up off chair
- Deep breathing
- Carry/push/pull heavy objects such as pushing a laundry basket or wheelbarrow with a load, pulling a blanket or wagon with a load, carrying groceries, always let your child open heavy doors
- Heavy duty chores like sweeping, mopping, dusting, scrubbing, taking out trash, yard work
- Do animal walks (crab walk, bear walk, army crawl, etc.)
- Squeezing sponges, spray bottles, clay, playdoh, stapler/hole punch
- Climb on outdoor toys like park equipment or through an obstacle course
- Exercise such as age appropriate bike riding, trampoline, walking, calisthenics, yoga, stretching
- Roll up in a heavy blanket or quilt, sit in a bean bag chair, make a couch cushion sandwich with your child as the filling
- Massage also provides proprioceptive input, so massaging with lotion, using towel for vigorous drying off, rolling a ball on the body, and bear hugs are excellent
- Chewy food breaks with licorice, gummy bears/worms, gum, beef jerky, raisins, fruit leathers, Fruit Roll-ups, Starburst or Tootsie Rolls
- Crunchy food breaks with dry cereal, raw fruits/vegetables, pretzels or popcorn
- Suck on hard candy or drink through a straw – the curlier and narrower the straw and the thicker the drink the more proprioception it gives
- Games with blowing bubbles, sucking and blowing through a straw, whistles, etc.