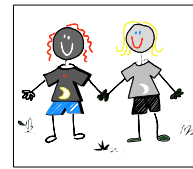


## Information and advice from:



**Early Development and  
Inclusion Team**  
Supporting Inclusion at the  
Early Years Foundation Stage



# "Heavy Work"

Our body has an internal sense known as **proprioception**, which is a sense of body awareness. Messages are sent to the brain from our muscles and joints, which tell us how our bodies are moving; what each part of the body is doing in relation to others; and where they are in relation to each other.

The **proprioceptive system** is activated when we push or pull on objects e.g. when we open or close a door, as well as any time joints are compressed together or stretched apart, such as, when chewing.

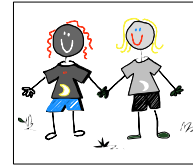
**Proprioceptive** input can have a calming and organising effect on the body, particularly if we are feeling over-stimulated or over-whelmed. It also helps to balance or 'modulate' the information coming in from our other sensory systems, such as, loud noises, certain textures, and bright lights.

Activities that involve "**heavy work**", such as pushing and pulling, provide input to the proprioceptive system. They can help children to become calmer, more organised in their behaviour, and better able to concentrate and follow directions.

Try including some of these "**heavy work**" activities into your child's day to help support calm behaviour and attention skills:

- Try different animal walks: bear walks, crab walks, snake crawls on the tummy, frog jumps. Try a turtle walk – place a large cushion on your child's back and see how long they can crawl around before their 'shell' falls off.
- March or jog on the spot to music while stamping.
- Push the doorway to see if you can make it wide enough for an elephant to come in – stand in the doorway with arms outstretched and push against the pillars each side. See how many seconds you can push for.
- Try to push the walls of the room down.
- Jump and crash land on a mattress, bean-bag, etc.
- Play tug-of-war: in different positions – standing, sitting, kneeling or lying on tummy.

## Information and advice from:



**Early Development and  
Inclusion Team**  
Supporting Inclusion at the  
Early Years Foundation Stage

- Jump on a trampoline.
- Try skipping.
- Hang from monkey bars.
- Pour items such as sand, dry beans, dry rice or water back and forth between containers (larger containers = more 'heavy work' – try cutting the bottom off an empty milk jug to use as a scoop).
- Digging and hunting for buried objects in the sand tray. Digging in the garden.
- Squeeze, squash and press playdough.
- Rip paper (magazines, junk paper) and cardboard (cereal boxes, etc). Create a collage with the pieces.
- Play catch with a big cushion.
- Ride a trike, bike or scooter board – anything that needs "heavy work" to move forward.
- Lie on tummy while looking at a book or doing a puzzle.
- Push a pushchair, a wheelbarrow, a shopping trolley with something heavy in.
- Pull a box or cart with stones, toys or a friend in (safely).
- Carry a box or books a short distance.
- Sweeping, mopping, and wiping down tables; washing mirrors and windows.
- "Painting" the garden fence with a large emulsion brush and a bucket of water.
- Blow bubbles, a whistle, a harmonica, a pinwheel.
- At snack time, eat chewy or crunchy foods; drink through a straw.

*NB. Where a child is experiencing sensory difficulties which significantly interfere with their ability to complete daily activities and enjoy interaction with others, a referral to an Occupational Therapist should be considered and is arranged through parental discussion with the child's GP.*