Joint Compressions

Our bodies need proprioceptive input (deep pressure input) to improve our body awareness, body organization, postural security; and once the body becomes more secure and organized, then it can relax, calm down, and handle stress in a more efficient manner.

Joint compressions give input to joints and muscles and help a child have a better sense of where their body is in space. It is also **deep pressure** that tends to be calming and help the brain organize itself to perform tasks.

In addition, joint compressions also utilize human touch with has been shown to facilitate the release of dopamine and norepinephrine. Dopamine and norepinphrine are two neurotransmitters that are responsible for mood regulation, motivation, lowering anxiety levels, and lowering depression (Neurogistics, 2015). So, by doing joint compressions with your child, you are actually getting" double the bang for your buck" as you are reaping the benefits of both proprioception and touch combined. This will not only help your child on a physical and physiological level, but it will also help you and your child to bond as you complete this calming activity together.



Keep the activity calm, and relaxed… if you need to feel more calm prior to beginning try "hook-ups" or "pretzel" and breathe deeply for a 15-30 seconds before starting… and keep breathing long slow breaths while doing the joint compressions!

Joint compressions, repeating compressions 10 times. You can also try holding position and count to 10. Explore with child to get a sense of their preference and check in throughout to ensure they are comfortable. Ensure joints are supported in alignment.

1. **Hand to Elbow**: Hold hand in hand shake position, stabilize elbow and quickly press hand back into direction of elbow. Repeat both sides.
2. **Shoulders and Hips**: Press down on both shoulders (this will also compress hips) OR **Shoulder to Elbow**: Hold elbow with one hand and top of shoulder with the other side.
3. **Knee to Foot**: Press down on knees through ankles and onto the floor. Repeat both sides OR in sitting, hold the child's foot under the heel and directly above knee.
4. **Fingers/Wrist**: Stabilize palm and quickly pull out and in on fingers or do compressions with hand in fist OR **Toes/Ankles**: before putting on socks or boots you can apply compressions to the toes to reduce sensitivity.

***Make sure to keep watch for signs such as changes in heart or respiration rate, pallor or fainting. If this occurs, discontinue immediately and notify the occupational therapist.**

Incorporating a variety of "grounding" input throughout the day can be very regulating and organizing. Some children can also be taught to use active resistance (e.g. pushing hands against each other or feet against a wall) to implement the strategies more independently.

This information is intended for educational and informational purposes. Please reach out with questions.