The Value of Heavy Work

When occupational therapists talk about heavy work, they are referring to activities that provide resistance to the muscles, joints and ligaments (proprioceptive input). This input is calming and regulating to the nervous system.

Have you every felt calm and relaxed after a good gym session where you have been lifting weights, or perhaps running, or doing manual work such as gardening? This is likely due to the organising and calming effect of these activities on our minds and bodies.

Basically, any activity where you are engaging the muscles in actions such as pushing, pulling and lifting can have a regulating effect on the nervous system.

You do not always need equipment to engage in these activities as body weight can be utilised effectively.

The below checklist was created as a starting point for you to explore what activities work for you. There are many activities that provide resistance to your muscles and joints so it is a great opportunity to get creative!

HEAVY WORK

- [ ] Push ups/ Wall push ups/ Chair push ups/ Holding a plank
- [ ] Eating chewy foods or chewing gum
- [ ] Yoga or pilates
- [ ] Progressive muscle relaxation
- [ ] Household tasks such as laundry and vaccuming
- [ ] Gardening tasks such as digging or pushing a wheelbarrow
- [ ] Bodyweight exercises with resistance bands e.g. squats and lunges
- [ ] Dancing to music
- [ ] Running- in nature or using a treadmill/ cross trainer with resistance
- [ ] Swimming
- [ ] Walking with ankle/wrist weights on
- [ ] Weighted backpack walks or hiking
- [ ] Rearraning furniture