



Midlands Partnership

NHS Foundation Trust

A Keele University Teaching Trust



RESPONDING TO CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL WELLBEING FOLLOWING LOCKDOWN:

A Guide and Resource for Primary Schools

Co-Produced by Practitioners
within Tamworth Child and Adolescent
Mental Health Services (CAMHS) with particular
thanks to Gemma Dineley



Contents

Context to the Document	3
Introduction	4
Recognising the Signs.....	5
Thinking Time: A Guide for Teachers	6
Thinking Time (Printable Worksheet)	8
Refocusing Activities (Printable Worksheet)	9
5 4 3 2 1 (Printable Worksheet)	10
ABC (Printable Worksheet)	11
Mindfulness: A Guide for Teachers.....	12
Body Awareness Activity: A Guide for Teachers	13
Body Awareness Activity (Printable Worksheet)	14
Mindfulness Activities.....	15
Feeling Overwhelmed/Panicky Feelings: A Guide for Teachers	17
Panicky Feelings: Support Plan	18
Emotional and Sensory Regulation: A Guide for Teachers	19
Emotions: Colour Zones	20
Actions to Take: Colour Zones	21
The Wellbeing Tree	22
Next Steps	23
Appendix 1. Sensory Calming Ideas	24



Context to the Document

Following directives from the UK Government, on March 20th 2020 all schools across the UK were closed in order to limit the spread of Coronavirus, later to become more familiarly known as Covid 19. On March 23rd 2020, the UK Prime Minister announced the country was to enter Lockdown Measures, closing businesses and workplaces and placing great restrictions on how we go about our daily lives. This period in our lives will now often be referred to as the *Covid 19 Pandemic* and following this, there is an anticipation of increased mental health difficulties and stressors in our child population.

Daily life has taken a radically different shape than what went before and is unfolding for us all in ways that are sometimes welcome, sometimes not. Children will, on all sorts of levels, have varying awareness of the impact of the change. Sometimes this will be something they are able to talk about, or symbolise through play, art, music, movement. For other children, (or the same child but at a different point in the day), words aren't available and the feeling is in their body or behaviour. The return to school may be a challenging time for some children, returning to a now unfamiliar structure, separation from their family after a prolonged period of togetherness, perhaps more intense learning than they have been experiencing, peer friendships and potentially dealing with the loss of loved-ones. Stress levels may be higher, alongside increased presentations of anxieties and low mood.

Children require the company of adults to think with them, and about them, without being intrusive. This is likely to be an idea that is the bread and butter of relationships with children in schools but worth drawing attention to because whatever the strategy or resource that you find yourselves offering to children in your schools what they take in, along with the content, is the feeling of being thought about. Being thought about (and with) provides children with the raw material to begin to understand their feelings and thoughts a little more confidentially.

Think about who matters to you, calling to mind good connections, people, relationships, interests and experiences. These are some of the various internal resources that help each of us steady up. The emotional health of adults supporting children is vital to everyone's wellbeing. It can be tempting to forget this but it appears the pandemic has perhaps reminded us that this is true. The more you feel supported the more you can support the children. It is with this in mind that we offer the resources that follow.



Introduction

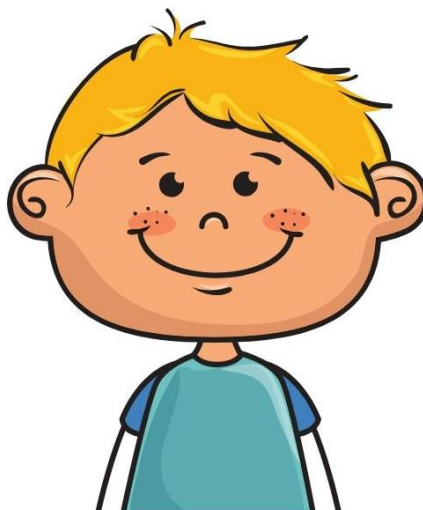
As a CAMHS service, we felt it important to reach out and support our colleague Teachers in what may be a challenging and anxiety provoking time for all. With limited resources, it was felt that a 'Resource Pack' would be a step towards supporting Teachers in managing the emotional and psychological health of children.

Included in this pack are some tools to help recognise some of the feelings and behaviours children may present with and a suggested link to some resources and activities which may support in the management of these experiences. You may be familiar with some of them, or as a school have your own, or perhaps find some of them new. We would encourage you to consider what may be helpful in your setting, with your classes and for individual children. Using these tools and integrating some of these activities within the school day may assist in creating opportunities for children to steadily find their feet.

Our aim is to facilitate the children's ability to cope and regulate during this challenging time and decrease the number of children needing further mental health support or intervention, and Teachers play a pivotal role in achieving this.

**The duties of a teacher
are neither few nor small,
but they elevate the mind
and give energy to the
character.**

DOROTHEA DIX



Recognising the Signs

As teachers, you will no doubt be aware of the many feelings and behaviours children may present with. Below is an idea of some of the common and recognisable indicators that a child may be struggling. This is not an exhaustive list and children manifest their struggles in different ways. However, you may find it useful to use the below as a guide in selecting suitable worksheets. The table below is not aimed to pinpoint symptoms but to support you in giving children a helping hand as and when they need it.

	Things you might see	Worksheet or Tool to consider
Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive worrying • Reassurance-seeking • Seems clingy • Wants care giver • May complain of tummy-aches • Increased crying • Decreased appetite • Increased irritability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking Time • Mindfulness • Sensory Calming Ideas
Low Mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sadness • Not engaging in things they used to enjoy • Seeming withdrawn from friends • Increased irritability • Seeming tired/fatigued • Low confidence • Hurting them-selves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindfulness • <i>It could be helpful to consider if any child has experienced a bereavement.</i> • Sensory Calming Ideas
Feeling Overwhelmed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racing heartbeat • Feeling faint • Sweating • Nausea • Chest pain • Shortness of breath • Trembling • Hot flushes • Feeling of dread • Numbness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling Overwhelmed/Panicky Feelings section • Sensory Calming Ideas
Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritability • Complaints of headaches • Outbursts of anger or crying • Change in eating habits (decreased or increased) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindfulness • Emotional Regulation • Sensory Calming Ideas

NB, this is not a diagnostic tool.

Thinking Time: A Guide for Teachers

Worries about the Pandemic may be expressed in imaginative ways by children. Listening to them helps them feel a worry can be heard. Feeling heard helps them to feel emotionally contained. Feeling contained helps everybody's worries steady up.

What is thinking time?

This is a planned part of the day where children can bring the thoughts and feelings that have been on their mind so that they can be calmly listened to. Where children's experiences mean they spend most of their day worrying, the worries can get in the way of important things like schoolwork or enjoying themselves. By offering a specific time of day for worries, children are invited to "pocket" their concerns for later, resting assured that they can worry about it later if they need to. This can then help them to properly engage in the school day. The important consideration is that this space is offered consistently and reliably for the containment of a child's worries which then allows them to feel safer and better supported.

Who should thinking time be offered to?

It may be useful to consider that following Covid 19 and transition back to school, that having thinking time may be useful for all children. Thinking time might be particularly beneficial for children who show some signs of anxiety or excessive worrying. Some of these worries are likely to be hypothetical, such as worries about the future or about things out of the child's control, and so can't be fixed.

When should we run thinking time?

It may be useful to consider the importance of identifying this at the beginning of the day and 'pocket' these thoughts, which creates a sense of security where adults can contain these worries. Following this, you might want to consider an identified specific time of the day that your school can conduct thinking time. An example could be 15 minutes towards the end of the day, allowing 10 minutes to worry and 5 minutes to play a game which allows time for re-focusing and reward time.

How often should we run this?

Running thinking time every day provides a regular safe and secure space. You can adapt how often thinking time is offered based on need, but perhaps offer it daily during the initial transition period to generate a sense of psychological safety.

How do I introduce this to the children?

Consider with colleagues whether this approach would be helpful to use with an individual child, a group of children or a wider group. Included is a worksheet explaining what thinking time is. Talk through this with the child, identifying when thinking time is and for how long. Identify how that child will save their worry for later – this could be writing in a worry diary/journal, drawing a quick picture, using the concept of a worry safe (cardboard box) – whatever will work best for them in the context of your school setting.

Included is a number of different re-focusing techniques. The resource for teachers gives an overview of a couple of techniques that don't require printed materials. Offer the child one or two that they can use after expressing their worry. This may help to focus their mind back on the here and now. You may find it useful to print off some of the included worksheets for the child to keep with them.

How do I run thinking time in the context of Social Distancing?

Ideally thinking time would take place in a quiet space free from as much distraction as possible. Give the child a specific length of time to give them the opportunity to work through their worry with an adult if they want to. Resist the urge to fix what they are worrying about (with an exception to safeguarding procedures). Some children may want to go sit in a corner, on the floor, away from the group – this is ok.

At the end of the space, allow time to re-focus and move forwards from this worry. This could be running around outside, dancing, playing a game together, getting out some toys – whatever your school can think of and facilitate – as long as it is enjoyable.



Thinking Time (Printable Worksheet)



My thinking time is at _____.

I'll save my worries from the day for thinking time.

My thinking time will be up to _____ minutes.

After thinking time, I will _____



During the day, if I have a worry I will _____

_____ to save it for later.

To help me with my worries, I am going have a go at these things now.

Refocusing Activities (Printable Worksheet)

5 4 3 2 1

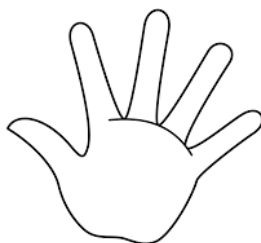
Name 5 things I can see,

4 things I can touch

3 things I can hear

2 things I can smell

1 thing I can taste



Colours

Name all the different colours you can see in the room.



Tensing and Releasing your Body

Scrunch up parts of your body for 20 seconds, then release and notice the feeling. Do this across different parts of the body.

Breathing

Keep still and take deep breaths.

Think the word “In” when you breathe in and “Out” when you breathe out.

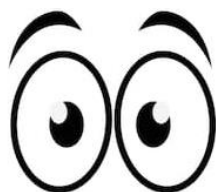
Do this 5 times.



ABC

Look around the room and name something beginning with A, then B, then C, see how far through the alphabet you can get!

5 4 3 2 1 (Printable Worksheet)



Name 5 things I can see.



4 things I can touch



3 things I can hear



2 things I can smell



1 thing I can taste

ABC (Printable Worksheet)

Look around the room and list something you can see beginning with each letter – how far can you get?

A		N	
B		O	
C		P	
D		Q	
E		R	
F		S	
G		T	
H		U	
I		V	
J		W	
K		X	
L		Y	
M		Z	



Mindfulness: A Guide for Teachers

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the practice of focusing your mind to be fully engaged in the present. It is a technique used to increase awareness of our own thoughts, the feelings in our body and the world around us. The practice is a reminder to focus on 'the Here and Now' and an activity that should be open to everyone as it is beneficial for pupils and staff alike.

Why is this beneficial?

Practicing mindfulness has been found to increase our mental wellbeing and decrease anxiety, stress and low mood (Stanford University). By focusing the mind on a particular task, both children (and adults) can find that their mind does not wander onto negative thoughts as readily and in turn can help pupils steady their mind before the beginning of lessons (Smiling Mind).

How long should mindfulness last?

There are many different mindfulness activities, ranging from a couple of minutes to over 20. Included are a few worksheets and options to use, but there are hundreds of options and ideas out there, with timescales to suit your needs. Further resources can be found in "Next Steps" the back of the pack.

When should we run mindfulness?

This is completely up to you. Mindfulness can be an excellent way to focus at the beginning of the day or at the start of a lesson. It could also be beneficial to add in a couple of quick activities after break and lunch, or you could find time towards the end of the day to add in a longer activity.

How do I introduce this to the children?

Mindfulness can be a flexible exercise to incorporate and introduce into the school day. After identifying when you would like to run it, take a look at the resources available and decide which you'd like to run. All of the resources and suggestions will include instructions on how to run the activity.



Body Awareness Activity: A Guide for Teachers

This is an activity that can be run within 5 to 15 minutes depending on how long you want to give the child to think about their sensations. It may also be run with or without the worksheet and can be done sitting comfortably on a chair or lying down on the floor.

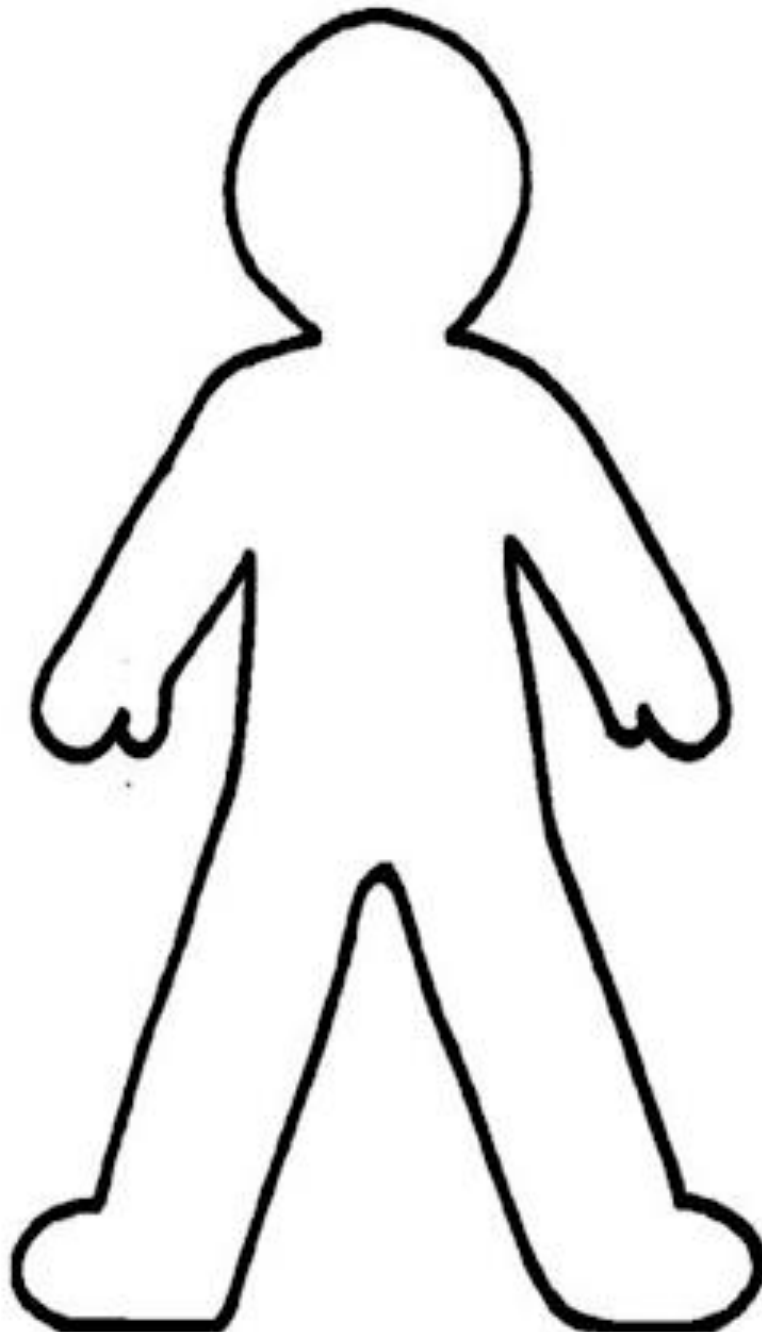
For the younger children who need guidance, ask the children to close their eyes and think about the feelings in their toes, they can give them a wiggle to help bring awareness to the area. Slowly work up, guiding them which part to move or think about next.

Running this without the worksheet teaches children awareness of the sensations in their bodies. The worksheet then offers a creative way to express this (through pictures or words) to practice identifying them, with an option at the end to consider what these sensations could mean in relation to their emotions – e.g. could those wiggly lines in my tummy be because I'm scared or worried.



Body Awareness Activity (Printable Worksheet)

Use the person below to draw or write the different things you can feel in your body. Close your eyes and focus on your toes, then your feet, ankles and keep working up bit by bit all the way to your head. Think about if you can feel any tingles or pinches or anything else.



Can any of these feelings be explained by my emotions?

Are they because I'm happy or sad or angry or scared or something else?

Mindfulness Activities

The Raisin

Give each child a raisin in the palm of their hand and set a timer. Somewhere between 15 and 45 seconds depend on the age of the class.

In that time, guide the children to look only at their raisin, noticing the different lines and bumps they can see; does it have a smell? Does the other side look different?

Encourage the children to focus on that object only for the duration and be mindful of the new things they can notice by looking at something more closely.



Why is this useful?

This activity challenges the children to sit still and focus their mind on a small and seemingly insignificant item. This can slow the children down and gives them something new and strange to look at. The children are challenged to appreciate intricate details we normally overlook and ignore the distractions in the rest of the room.

Listening Circle



If possible, take the children outside to sit down in a circle. Encourage them to sit down, close their eyes and listen carefully to the different sounds. When they have identified one, rather than shout it out, ask them to raise their hand to share it.

Why is this useful?

This activity again encourages children to slow down and appreciate the here and now. The children are growing awareness of the external world and learning to focus their mind on a particular activity. Spending time in nature has been found to reduce stress levels in children and adults alike.

Emotion Describing

Similar to the Body Awareness this activity involves linking body sensations to an emotion, but in reverse. Ask the children to sit in a circle and give them an emotion to consider. Ask them to think how this emotion feels in different parts of their body and to raise their hand

to share their ideas. To finish, ask them to think what sensations they have in their body and to one by one share them.

Why is this useful?

This activity helps to teach awareness of the link between our emotions and body sensations. This helps to improve children's ability to recognise and name their emotions and improve their self-awareness.

Take a Breath

This activity is located within the thinking time section, but is also useful for mindful breathing. Adapt this to being a timed, teacher led event so that the children can focus on the breaths only, rather than having to count the number of breaths; somewhere between 30 seconds – 1 minute depending on the age group.

Why is this useful?

Children are challenged to focus only on their breath and ignore the sounds and other stimuli around them, aided by the "In" and "Out" of their inner voice. This slows the child down, aiding focus and teaching to avoid distractions.

Many of the re-focusing techniques from thinking time also offer basic alternative introductions into mindfulness.



Feeling Overwhelmed/Panicky Feelings: A Guide for Teachers

This is akin to a system overload where the body experiences a rush of intense mental and physical symptoms and is in a state of “fight, flight or freeze” (Healthline). This can seemingly occur for no apparent reason and often comes on very quickly.

Acute panicky feelings often occur between 5 to 20 minutes and can be very scary for whoever is experiencing them, regardless of age. They are not physically harmful and so emotional support is the most important aspect if one of your pupils is experiencing them. The calm, kind and reliable presence of an adult who knows the child will help.

This section is to guide teachers on how to support children during these feelings, rather than how to prevent them. If a child is experiencing multiple episodes of panic, a referral for further support may be needed – see “Next Steps” at the back of the pack for more information.



Panicky Feelings: Support Plan

- If possible, empty the space the child is in, reducing the number of eyes on the child and the potential feeling of being enclosed. Even if disruptive, it is better to move the other children away rather than the child experiencing the panicky feelings, as they are already feeling overwhelmed and moving in this time is very difficult.
- Open windows or help the child to remove their coat/jacket if they are getting hot flushes.
- Have a member of staff with the child – ideally someone they have a good relationship with. Gently talk to the child in a calm voice. Try to guide the child's breathing to a steadier rate, using deep breaths. To help the child focus their mind, it may be useful to ask them to focus on the shape of a star or a square, breathing in at a point/corner and breathing out at a point/corner.
- Remind the child that this feeling will go away and they will be ok. Avoid rushing them and wait for their breathing and feelings to return to normal.
- Provide appropriate after-care, including a drink of water and emotional support.

ALL FEELINGS

ARE FOR EVERYONE!

There's no such thing as a "girl feeling" or a "boy feeling".

We can **all** feel:



Angry



Sad



Scared



Confident



Proud



Affectionate



Brave



Insecure



Assertive

All feelings are **NORMAL** and **HUMAN**.
What matters is how you express those feelings.

©Elise Gravel

Emotional and Sensory Regulation: A Guide for Teachers

Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation is an individual's capacity to influence their emotional state to a more manageable level. This includes the ability to self-soothe when anxious or calm oneself down. It is gained through ordinary relationships in a child's growing up in combination with their temperament. Other children with less capacity may not be as aware of their emotions or have access to positive regulation techniques and may need some additional help.

General education around emotions and some regulation ideas is a positive way to aid children with this. On pages 20-22 you will find some examples of resources or display boards that can be shared around the classroom, with tips for children to identify their emotions and ideas to "get back to green" or regulate.

Sensory Regulation

One way that we interact and engage with the world is through our senses; Smell, Taste, Touch, Hearing and Sight. There are also two other less well known senses called Proprioception (body position) and Vestibular (balance). When our brains make sense of the information in a balanced and regulated way we are then able to perform at our best.

When children experience emotional difficulties (emotional de-regulation) it has an impact on how well they can regulate their sensory experiences because the body is in a state of hypervigilance. By struggling to process and regulate their sensory needs, this can further transpire into difficulties regulating their emotions and behaviours. Sensory regulating activities are useful to support children to stay calm, focus on tasks required and remain regulated. It may be useful to consider the 'Calming Sensory Ideas' worksheet to incorporate fun sensory regulating activities into the school day. Please see Appendix 1: Sensory Calming ideas for further exploration.



Emotions: Colour Zones



Actions to Take: Colour Zones



GO



Ready to learn!





REST
AREA



Quick
wiggle to
wake up



Ask to see
the school
nurse



Ask to walk
or run
around

What can I do?



QUIET
ZONE



SLOW



I need help



5 deep
breaths



Ask to walk
or run
around



STOP



Drink some
water



Slowly count
to 10

The Wellbeing Tree

This is a great way to share positive coping strategies. You can draw a tree or use a template, such as the one below. On each leaf, write one thing you find helpful or enjoyable. You can have as many leaves as you wish! The tree can be placed on a wall for everyone to share ideas, or it can be created individually.





Next Steps

If after discussion with colleagues, and in discussion with individual families, you feel a child requires additional support from more specialist mental health services, you may wish to follow these next steps;

- Contact **Action for Children** - Staffordshire's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service for children aged 5-18 yrs.
Website: www.staffordshire-ewb.actionforchildren.org.uk/ or
Email: StaffordshireEWB@actionforchildren.org.uk
Parents and Young People can make a self-referral on 01543 510145 (please note the number will change at the end of May but the website will be updated).
- If there are concerns of a more complex nature, please contact the **Locality CAMHS** team for your area. Further information and resources can be found at <https://camhs.mpft.nhs.uk/staffordshire>
- For urgent safeguarding needs, these would be discussed with the schools designated safeguarding lead and further action considered. First Response can be contacted on 0800 131 3126 or complete an online enquiry form.

Appendix 1. Sensory Calming Ideas

Sensory Calming Ideas

Deep pressure exercises, play and movement to calm and organise an overwhelmed body

April 2020

Behaviours (when in excess) that you might see in your child that may respond to sensory input:

- Biting/chewing non-food items
- Banging head
- Jumping off furniture
- Fidgeting
- Distractibility
- Making noises
- Poor sleep
- Spinning
- Sensitivity to noise, touch, taste, smell, movement
- Pinching/hurting themselves
- Squeezing things/people/animals too tightly



Principles of deep pressure

Deep pressure is vital for EVERYONE to calm the body and mind. If it is your child who needs this input the impact is more effective if you do it with them - we call this CO-REGULATION. Dysregulation in a child may look like disorganised, fraught, upset, distressed, angry, shouty and fidgety behaviours. Deep pressure and movement is a helpful response to supporting children who have experienced some form of trauma and difficult experiences and children who have neurodevelopmental disorders, learning difficulties and anxiety.

The main two principles are deep pressure to the body (especially joint areas) and movement that is linear (up and down or back and forward NOT lots of spinning and upside down movements as this can have the opposite effect!!)



Play, play, play!!

Activity MUST be led by the child, meaningful to them and with their consent



Deep pressure exercises

You and your child can choose how many of these you do and how long for...the only rules are child-led and don't do anything that hurts! Do these exercises 5 minutes before a thinking task or something that might be challenging (before the dysregulation occurs)

Seated exercises

- Seated on a chair, place your hands under your sitting bones and push yourself up so you are slightly lifted for a count of 5, repeat
- Place your hands in prayer position and push wrists together for count of 5, repeat
- Cross your arms over your chest, hands on opposite shoulders and give yourself a BIG hug

Standing exercises

- 10 wall push ups (like a press up but against a wall, repeat
- Create a bridge between your and your child's hands – palms together – and gently push for 10 seconds, repeat
- Put your hands on top of your head and gently push down for 5-10 seconds and repeat

Floor exercises

- Wrap yourselves in a blanket each and roll or move like a caterpillar
- Lie over gym ball moving forward and back
- Army commando crawling across the floor (you could make it fun by racing each other)

Create your own sensory soothe box

Squishies

Stress balls

Play dough

Photo book

Colouring book

Scented handkerchief

Craft feathers

Chewy bar

Headphones and music



The great outdoors

Being outdoors and in nature uses all 7 of our senses. Children are naturally drawn to explore and play beyond four walls. Every element of nature has a different touch, smell, sound and appearance. It gives the opportunity to move their bodies and use their imagination in ways the indoors can't replicate



- Playing at the playground
- Make a rope or garden swing
- Climbing frames
- Skipping rope
- Bouncing on a space hopper
- Make a mud pie
- Jumping in puddles
- Wheelbarrow walking
- Blowing bubbles
- Create a garden obstacle course
- Bouncing up and down (not up and over) on trampoline or trampette
- Create a sand pit
- Paddling pool
- Create a den
- Make a bug hotel
- Draw on stones/pathways with chalks
- Paint the garden fence (with water!)
- Walk the dog (if you have one)
- Make a mini garden in a tray or pot
- Plant some seeds
- Dig for buried treasure



Get sporty!



Exercise and sporty activity is a great way to get loads of calming and regulating sensory input in a natural way for a child. Exercise releases endorphins and serotonin - our happy hormones - and makes good use of adrenalin released during the fight or flight stress response. Lots of sporty activities involve increasing that calming deep pressure input and regulating movement for the brain. You don't have to join a team if you don't want to - just head to the park or in the privacy of your own garden or home. Here are a few ideas....



Rugby



Martial Arts



Swimming



Bike riding



Kickboxing/boxing



Dancing



Gymnastics



Football



Yoga



Sensory food and drink

The best foods for sensory regulation are chewy, crunchy and sucky foods. Some children need lots of intense flavour too and others need less stimulation and therefore offer plainer options



Drinking through a straw or sports bottle gives lots of deep pressure input

Try:

- Chewy cereal bars
- Rice cakes
- Milkshakes and smoothies
- Make your own ice lollies
- Chewing gum (if old enough)
- Twiglets
- Toast fingers
- Bagels

Play (indoors)

- Make a hidey-hole or den using cushions/pop-up tent/large box
- Large pillows or bean bags for burrowing in
- Playing tug of war with pets
- Make tunnels out of boxes to crawl in and out of
- Lie over gym ball or cushions to play board games/computer games or watch TV
- Messy play with pasta, rice or cereal
- Fill a bowl of water and bubbles and put in pans and safe kitchen utensils, funnels, sponges
- Make your own play dough - add scented oils for extra sensory input
- Finger painting
- Sponge painting
- Potato printing
- Air drying clay or model magic
- Bake fairy cakes (stirring the mixture)
- Kneading bread dough



Household activities

Sometimes children really like to help with the grown up tasks – these will only be therapeutic calming activities if they want to do them and age appropriate

- Making the beds
- Sweeping the floor
 - Vacuuming
 - Mopping
- Digging the garden

Ideas for equipment

- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Gym ball | • Cushions/pillows | • Art materials |
| • Blankets | • Stress balls and squishies | • Air drying clay |
| • Cuddle swing | • Bubbles | • Pop-up tent |
| • Play dough | • Baking ingredients | • Paper straws |
| • Aromatherapy oils | • Shoe box | • Play sand |
| • Bubbles | • Chewy bar | • Empty cardboard boxes |

Please look out for our other leaflets - advice and ideas for sleep, toileting, eating non-food items, create your own sensory ladder and advice for children with low registration of sensory input