



So, what actually is 'heavy work'?

The term "heavy work" refers to experiences that involve heavy resistance and provide proprioceptive input. Ideally these experiences should be performed for 5-15 minutes in a slow and steady manner to produce a calming effect, improve attention levels, improve body awareness and muscle tone and decrease sensory defensiveness. Experiences may need to be repeated at various times throughout the day for an ongoing positive effect.

What does the term proprioception mean?

Proprioception refers to the sensory system responsible for body position. It enables us to know where our body is in space and how our body is moving and is therefore important for motor control and posture. Proprioception relies on receptors in our muscle, tendons and ligaments that surround joints to provide information to the brain.



Proprioceptive input can be calming and organising for children. Experiences that provide deep pressure to the body have been shown to change activity in certain parts of the nervous system which has a calming and focusing effect. This is thought to be due to a release of endorphins, serotonin and dopamine (which are "happy" neurotransmitters), that produce a feeling of calm within our nervous system.

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Heavy Work Experience Examples:

- Do animal walks (crab walk, bear walk) or commando army crawling
- Jump on a mini trampoline
- Stack chairs
- Use squeeze toys
- Play "cars" under a table where the child pushes the car with one hand while creeping and weight bearing on the other hand
- Climb and swing on play equipment
- Carry heavy items (buckets filled with water, or sand)
- Push or pull boxes with toys or a few books in them (more resistance is provided if boxes are pushed/pulled across grass or carpeted floor).
- Push chairs into the table after a meal
- Put large toys and equipment away
- Build a cubby house by pulling heavy blankets across a few chairs
- Play catch with a heavy ball
- Play jumping games such as hopscotch, jump rope, jumping on cushions, rocket jumps, star jumps, bouncing on a therapy ball.
- Digging in the sand pit
- Tug of war or pulling or stretching a piece of TheraBand
- Pulling on a rope (tie a rope to a tree, make a rope pulley)
- Yoga positions or wheelbarrow racing
- Obstacle course



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