



Sensory Processing and FASD: How Heavy Work can Help

Everybody is born with an internal sense of body awareness known as “proprioception”. Our body senses proprioception from messages sent to our brain from our muscle and joint receptors. Sometimes people affected with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder have sensory processing difficulties. They may seek proprioceptive input when they are looking for a way calm and organize their nervous system, or they may alternate between “sensory seeking” and “sensory avoidant” days. A child who seems disruptive, full of excess energy, always jumping, crashing, etc. could actually be seeking proprioceptive input or a way to calm their nervous system. Heavy work activities (also known as proprioceptive input) can be used as a way to help increase attention, concentration, decrease defensiveness and help with self-regulation. It can also help children attend to tasks, sit still and has the ability to help with sleep issues. If your child has been identified with sensory processing difficulty, heavy work could be beneficial. Please note, it is most effective to consult with a professional, like an Occupational Therapist for the best type of proprioceptive input for your child and specific situation. When doing heavy work with your child, observation is essential! Take note of what activities calm your child and what activities hype them up. Observe and choose the activities that they most enjoy and that give you the results you desire. The list below includes several different examples of heavy work. Remember, this is just a tool - YOU are the expert on your child.

Active/Play Activities

- Stacking or moving chairs (making a fort)
- Animal walks: crab walk, snake crawl (on belly), frog jump
- Turtle walk (put heavy pillow “shell” on child’s back & have child crawl around until hit falls off)
- Wheelbarrow walk
- Jump & crash (into pillows, mattress, bean bag, or DIY crash pad)
- Tug of war
- Trampoline
- Jump rope
- Climb rock wall
- Spinning
- Swimming

Table and/or Calmer Activities

- Rip paper
- Theraputty/Thinking putty or Play-Doh
- Old style Etch-A-Sketch (resistive knobs and shaking to clear the picture)
- Scoop or pour sand, beans or rice between containers (bigger scoops = more heavy work)



Table and/or Calmer Activities (cont.)

- Blow bubbles, whistle, kazoo, harmonica, pinwheel or blowing through a straw to move small objects
- Wearing or using a weighted vest, lap pad or blanket

Household Chores as Heavy Work

- Help in the kitchen: stirring thick batter, kneading dough, using rolling pin, peeling fruits and vegetables
- Help in the garden: digging, weeding, watering, pushing wheelbarrow, raking leaves, carrying buckets
- Vacuuming, sweeping, mopping, wiping counters, washing mirrors, transferring laundry
- Carrying in groceries, backpack, books
- Pushing a shopping cart

Oral Input

- Eating chewy or crunchy foods: apples, carrots, dried fruit, fruit snacks, licorice, jerky, bagels, cheese, granola bars, celery, raisins, drinking thick drinks through a straw, chewing gum, etc.

For More information, visit www.charthope.org

 <https://www.facebook.com/ChartHope>