



# Pathways to Success

Helpful Strategies for Parents and Caregivers of Young Children

## Calming Strategies

Parents often ask for activities that are calming for their child. What is calming to one child may be stimulating for another child, and this can change from one environment to another. Here is a list of different activities to try, sorted into sensory categories.

### ORAL

- Eating crunchy foods (i.e.: pretzels, popcorn, apples, crackers, carrots etc.)
- Eating sour foods (i.e.: pickles, sour candies)
- Eating sweet food
- Drink from a straw (especially thicker fluids such as milkshakes or sucking yogurt through a straw)
- Suck on hard candy
- Chew on a chew toy, tubing, or gum for older children
- Take slow, deep breaths
- Blowing bubbles or blowing through a straw to blow cotton balls (or other toys) across the table/floor etc.

### MOVEMENT

- Jump up and down or jump up to touch something on the wall
- Swinging (in a straight line is most often most calming)
- Play on playground equipment such as slides, climbing structures, etc... (supervision required)
- Rocking on a rocking chair
- Walk quickly (ie: take the dog for a walk)
- Animal walks or wheelbarrow walks
- Dance
- Pushing a weighted cart/box across the floor, carrying backpack, bags or small boxes while walking
- Riding a tricycle or push-cart
- Play tug-of-war game
- Wearing Lycra clothing or pulling and stretching a large piece of Lycra material
- Using weighted or vibrating writing tools



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## **TOUCH**

- Holding and playing with a small toy (often safe squishy toys are great!)
- Rubbing a small piece of cloth or clothing item
- Cool shower or warm bath
- Washing face with cold (or warm) wash-cloth
- Pet or play with an animal or soft fur toy
- Hold or lean up against a stuffed animal or large pillows
- Being “squished” between two mats or pillows while playing the “sandwich” or “hotdog” game
- Rolling up in a blanket
- Deep pressure hug
- Hand/body lotions firmly massaged into the skin

\* Always let the child see you and make them aware that you are about to touch them. Avoid light touch such as tickling, touching skin with feathers, hair, jewelry or light clothing.

## **VISION**

- Dim lights for calming effect
- Remove visual distractions (i.e.: close curtains to decrease outside lights or open curtains and turn off inside lights, remove excess visual stimulation and tidy working/play areas)
- Read a book

## **LISTEN**

- Listen to classical music (even, slow beats)
- Listen to favorite music
- Use earphones to remove other distracting noises
- Avoid loud or noisy place if already very distracted or if trying an activity that requires concentration (i.e.: especially a new activity)