

## Paying Attention

### Calming strategies

Staying calm, even when anxious or stressed enables children to engage with others, participate in meaningful activities and enjoy life. Many children and young people respond inappropriately to events and situations and find it difficult to function and carry out every day activities. This may be influenced by fear of a particular sensation or activity, or due to becoming stuck in a pattern of behaviour. This can get in the way of communication with others and impact on everyday activities at home or at school.

### Activities to try at home and school:

- Please remember that the activities need to be appropriate to your child. You will probably need to experiment with these ideas to see what suits your child best and record what activities work
- Place linked hands on head and press down hard: count out loud slowly to 10 – keep pressing!
- Bear hug: fold arms over tummy, and hold onto your sides. Give yourself a big hug and squeeze! Keep hugging, and count out loud to 10
- Chair press-ups: put your hands on the sides of the chair and press down to lift your body weight off the seat: 5 times
- Do wall push ups with claps in between
- Hand-walking: from lying on the sofa, walk forward on your hands until just your feet are left supported on the sofa, then walk back on your hands
- Encourage the child to play on their tummy, pushing or weight bearing on their hands
- Animal walks – walking like a bear, crab, giraffe

### Heavy work activities that may help:

- Carry/Unpack heavy shopping
- Encourage your child to push the shopping trolley when you go shopping
- Allow you child to wear a heavy back pack
- Hoover
- Mop
- Ask your child to empty the rubbish
- Push heavy chairs under the table after a meal
- Get your child to carry buckets of water outside to water plants
- Allow your child to help wash the car

- Get your child to push the wheelbarrow, dig, rake the grass or leaves
- Go for a walk with your child
- Encourage your child to do some deep breathing exercises

**Activities to suggest to school:**

- Wash/wipe desks or wipe chalkboard or dry erase board
- Place chairs on the desks at the end of the day or take them down in the morning
- Fill a box with books for the child to carry to other classrooms
- Encourage the child to help prepare for PE lesson as much as possible by moving mats etc.
- Sharpen pencils with a manual sharpener
- Give the child opportunities to safely use hole punchers, staplers – anything that requires effort to use

**In addition:**

- Some children find that chewy foods help to calm them, alternatively some prefer crunchy foods. If you try both your child may naturally indicate which they prefer
- Encourage activities which involve using the mouth, like whistles, blowing bubbles, using blow pens
- Drink thick liquids (e.g. smoothies, milkshakes) through a straw, the thickness of the straw can be changed to make this harder – smaller straw = harder work and more proprioception
- Create a small, quiet area for your child e.g. a pop up tent or den from large boxes. Sometimes children need their own personal space where they can block out extra noise and visual distractions
- Encourage your child to use outdoor playground equipment e.g. climbing frames
- Use squeeze toys that can be squeezed quietly on the child's lap under the desk so that he or she does not disturb the class e.g. blu-tack