



# Sensory Circuits

## What are Sensory Circuits?

Many neurodivergent people have differences in the way they perceive and process sensory information. It is important to remember that sensory differences can impact significantly on play and learning as differences interpreting sensory information can have an impact on how an individual feels, thinks, behaves or responds. This may affect how children are able to focus and engage in play and learning opportunities at any given time. Sensory circuits can be a useful way of providing some of the sensory feedback an individual might be seeking.

Thomas Gray believes that participation in a sensory circuit is a great way to both energise and settle children into the school day. The aim of the activity is to support children to be in the optimum state of alertness, ready for learning.

Longer term benefits can include:

- ✓ Improvements in self-esteem
- ✓ Development of physical skills
- ✓ Differences in focus and attention and improved ability to settle down
- ✓ Some quiet, unresponsive children appear to have 'woken up' and are more readily engaging with other children in their class
- ✓ Improved communication skills for children working at all levels and with a variety of additional needs

## How does the sensory circuit work?

The sensory circuit runs in three sections based on theories of sensory processing and sensory integration.

The order of the circuit is extremely important:

- 1) Alerting section
- 2) Organising section
- 3) Calming section

## Alerting activities

The aim of section 1 is to provide vestibular stimulation (providing the brain with sensory information every time the position of the head moves in relation to gravity) within a controlled environment. This prepares the brain for learning and for the demands of the school environment.

Activities to try at home:

- bouncing on a mini trampoline, space hopper or gym ball.
- spinning a hoop
- bunny hops / crab walks / frog jumping/squat jumps/ jumping jacks
- gym ball for rolling over and bouncing on
- skipping

## Organising activities

Section 2 includes activities that require the child to organise their body, plan their approach and do more than one thing at a time in a set sequential order. These are skills that may increase a child's focus, attention span and performance within the classroom.

Organising activities include climbing, balancing, and throwing.

Activities to try at home:

- balancing on a beam / walking along a straight line
- log rolling
- throwing bean bags into a target or small balls/scrunched up paper into a bin.
- arm push ups against the wall
- squats (no jump), shallow lunge steps
- blowing bubbles
- skipping and jumping over a moving rope

## Calming activities

The section 3 calming activities provide input to ensure that as the children leaves the circuit they are calm and ready for the task ahead. Calming activities include press-ups, crawling exercises or an exercise ball squash.

Activities to try at home:

- weighted blanket
- having balls rolled over their backs
- hot-dogs (rolling child up tightly in a blanket)
- massaging hands, feet, arms or legs

