**Getting ready: Supporting regulation to help children join in (plain version)**

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Help your child prepare their body and mind by doing a few minutes of regulating activities that include lots of ‘heavy work’ – movements that need effort from their joints and muscles.

Examples include jumping or bouncing, climbing, pushing and pulling, stretching, hanging, squeezing, carrying heavier things. Pick activities that your child enjoys which don’t over heighten their responses.

What calms one child can heighten another. Use these suggestions as a starting point for your own ideas – you know your child best.

**Activity ideas**

Try using the journey to your chosen space to add some fun, controlled movement. This could be the same action repeated, or 2-3 different ones on the way.

* Climb or crawl up the stairs and bump down on bottom
* Carry a weighted lap pad or weighted toy
* Pull and stretch TheraBand or an old pair of winter tights
* Try different animal walks- frog jumps, bunny hops, crawl like a bear
* High knee march and swing arms. Add a rhythm with counting, or a song
* Walk in slow, exaggerated movements like an astronaut
* Shuffle ‘ski’ with feet in e.g. cardboard tissue boxes across a smooth floor
* Bend over and place both hands on a sturdy wheeled toy and push the toy to your chosen location
* Push against a wall or a person as hard as they can with extended arms. You could mark a spot at the correct height with their handprints if using a wall or door.
* Turn round, bend knees and press bottom or back against the wall as hard as they can. Marking the spot can be helpful.
* Do a simple yoga post on the spot. Look at ‘Cosmic Kids’ for ideas
* Do ten jumps on the spot or onto a target. You could also try this holding hands
* Slowly ‘walk’ hands up a wall to a marked spot where they have to stretch up tall and go up onto their toes. Hold for a count of 5 if they can
* Sit on the floor or settee and curl up in a tight ball with arms wrapped around knees and squeeze tight. Hold for a few seconds.

**Active play every day**

Creating opportunities for physically active play spread throughout the day, including outdoor play, helps children develop their gross and fine motor skills and sensory systems. This helps children learn new ways of responding and can have a positive impact on their ability to engage in everyday tasks and activities including eating and brushing teeth.

**Breathing**

Simple breathing activities can help children lower their heart rate and manage their responses to stressful situations. Try an appealing visual aid such as an expandable breathing ball or soft toy for ‘Teddy bear breathing’. Try ‘five finger breathing’ or deeply smelling a favourite scent and then blowing out through the mouth as if blowing out a candle.

There are lots of simple breathing strategies online. Experiment to find one your child can do and enjoy.

You may also find it useful to include a fun activity that creates calming deep pressure around the mouth. These can also help regulate breathing. See [here](https://www.autismtoothcare.com/toothbrushing/preparing-to-brush/getting-ready-to-brush/getting-you-your-child-ready) for ideas.

**Regulating activities for days when your child struggles to get up and move**

* Gently rock your child forwards and backwards or side-to-side combined with a hug
* Swing in a blanket, Lycra swing or hammock
* Prepare the body with squeezes to legs, arms, hands and shoulders
* Massage arms and legs with or without lotion or talc
* Try a weighted lap pad, animal or weighted blanket, no more than 10% of their body weight
* Offer a big bear hug, or give them a soft toy or cushion to squeeze
* Give a firm back rub
* ‘Sandwich’ your child between settee cushions with their head free and provide a press down over their body. Follow their lead to get the amount of pressure right.
* Invite your child to lie on a comfortable, supportive surface and roll a therapy, gym or peanut ball up and down their body
* Offer a fidget rool or toy that needs firm squeezing or stretching
* Try hugging or leaning against a vibrating cushion
* Curl up or stretch out in a body sock or pull a piece of Lycra fabric round back and shoulders
* Pull them along a blanket ‘magic carpet’ to get to where you need to be.