HEAVY WORK
HANDOUT

Heavy Work and Why It Works:

WHAT IS HEAVY WORK?
Heavy work is activity that requires effort from our muscles and these tasks usually involve pushing or pulling or lifting. The movement activities create resistance input to the muscles and this feedback is ultimately what online and regulates the sensory system. Heavy work activities can improve the ability to learn, focus, attend, and participate in everyday tasks.

The sensory system that is activated during heavy work activities is called the proprioceptive system. The proprioceptive system receives messages when the muscles move to do work. These messages flow back and forth to the brain and then the brain decides how much force a muscle should use based on the task of hand.

This allows children to use the correct amount of force when they need to hold something gently or when they need to lift something heavy. It's a complex system that is constantly adjusting to make sure the brain is getting the right information from all the joints and muscles in the body as well as making sure the muscle output is appropriate to the task. This concept is also known as body awareness and allows us to know where our body is in space and how to move our body.

WHY DOES HEAVY WORK HELP?
By working with the body through heavy work it decreases disturbances in other sensory systems. You can use heavy work to help children reach a calm,

energetic, alert state of mind. Heavy work can also give opportunities to engage in additional heavy task activities as they can use when they feel they need to gain in the afternoon when children arrive home or before school to help the sensory system feel calm and

energetic. Heavy work (and other sensory system input) can be integrated into daily functional tasks.

TYPES OF HEAVY WORK:
- Pushing Heavy Work
- Pulling Heavy Work
- Jumping Heavy Work
- Lifting Heavy Work
- Chewing and Sucking Heavy Work

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THE OT TOOLBOX®
WHAT IS HEAVY WORK?
Heavy work is activity that requires effort from our muscles and these tasks usually involve pushing or pulling or lifting. The movement activities create resistance input to the muscles and this feedback is ultimately what calms and regulates the sensory system. Heavy work activities can improve the ability to learn, focus, attend, and participate in everyday tasks.

The sensory system that is activated during heavy work activities is called the proprioceptive system. The proprioceptive system receives messages when the muscles move to do work. These messages flow back and forth to the brain and then the brain decides how much force a muscle should use based on the task at hand.

This allows children to use the correct amount of force when they need to hold something gently or when they need to lift something heavy. It’s a complex system that is constantly adjusting to make sure the brain is getting the right information from all the joints and muscles in the body as well as making sure the muscle output is appropriate to the task. This concept is also known as body awareness and allows us to know where our body is in space and how to move our body.

WHY DOES HEAVY WORK HELP?
By working with the proprioceptive system you can even out disturbances in other sensory systems. You can increase energy levels if you need to and you can reduce high energy levels to help children reach a calm, comfortable space to interact with the world.

If children are struggling with sensory processing and attention give opportunities to engage in additional heavy work activities during the day. Children will also gain valuable tools they can use when they feel they need to regulate themselves.

WHEN SHOULD YOU INCORPORATE HEAVY WORK?
Include a heavy work activity in the morning before school and again in the afternoon when children arrive home from school. Heavy work can also be incorporated into bedtime routines to help the sensory system feel calm and restful.

At school, heavy sensory input for the whole class can be incorporated at regular intervals during the day. It can be easy to incorporate heavy work (and other sensory system input) into daily functional tasks.

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