

## HEAVY WORK ACTIVITIES

All students can benefit from movement activities in the classroom that provide input to the proprioceptive receptors in the joints and ligaments. In addition to providing exercise, these types of "heavy work" movements make it easier for the student to focus and attend.

Heavy work activities (i.e. proprioceptive input) are used for students with sensory processing difficulties to help increase attention, decrease defensiveness, and modulate arousal.

Proprioceptive input is the performance of tasks that involves heavy resistance and input to the muscles and joints, and is essential in helping our bodies assimilate and process both movement (vestibular) and touch (tactile) information.

Proprioception is a form of sensory input to the muscles and joints that makes us aware of our "position in space" (i.e., where we are in relation to other objects or people). Students who have difficulty interpreting proprioceptive input have trouble grading and planning their movements and regulating their level of arousal.

Heavy work activities include:

1. Whole body actions involving pushing, pulling, lifting, playing and moving
2. Oral actions such as chewing, sucking and blowing
3. Using the hands for squeezing, pinching or "fidgiting"



This resistive input obtained through heavy work activities is generally organizing and can improve attention, arousal level, body awareness and muscle tone, as well as decreasing defensiveness.

## What is Heavy Work?

Just like adults, children need to be able to calm their bodies and self-regulate. Not all children can do this on their own, however, which is why **heavy work** is so important. **Heavy work** is any activity which requires you to use your muscles and joints, putting pressure on them as you move. It provides your body with necessary proprioceptive input to self-regulate.

## How Does Heavy Work Calm and Help Children Focus?

By providing deep proprioceptive input into a child's muscles and joints, and "**Heavy Work**" helps them self-regulate in the same way that exercise may help an adult deal with stress.

It allows them to recenter and refocus their body and energy into appropriate outlets.

## How Can You Use Chores to Provide Heavy Work?

This list of chores isn't meant to be done all at once, or even in one day. I have gathered as many examples of chores that provide "heavy work" to give you and your child options. The key is to remember that not all children are the same, and therefore will react differently to each activity. You will want to take the first few weeks introducing each chore and making sure your child is both developmentally ready and willing to complete the tasks.



**Teach the Chores** | Don't assume that your child knows how to do any of the items on the list. If you want to limit frustrations and make sure they are successful, do each chore on the list with your child until you know they feel comfortable doing them on their own.

**Small Doses** | There is no reason to try to do all of the chores on the list. At the start of each day pick one to two chores that you will use throughout the day.