

### Quick ideas:

- Tearing paper (either to glue onto something, or just to tear up)
- Crumpling newspaper
- Play-dough
- Bubble wrap popping
- Aluminum foil sculpting or squishing
- Cutting with scissors- either on a line you've drawn, randomly, cutting up drinking straws
- Blowing with straws- blow a cotton ball or kleenex off the table, across the floor, etc.
- Play 'lotion hands' squishing lotion on each others hands or rub your child's back or feet with lotion

**Heavy Work-** Push or pull a basket with books or a toys or a sibling in it. Carry the grocery bag, shovel dirt, push a chair- anything that involves using those muscles can be centering.

**Sensory Tubs:** Any of these items put out to swish fingers through, drive toy cars through or hide small treasure in can be fun. You may lay out a blanket or put a sensory tub inside a larger tub to help contain over-spill.

- **Cornmeal, Oats, Rice, Beans or Salt**
- **Shaving cream-** Some kids are hesitant to get fingers messy- you may want to try just a little bit of shaving cream at first, or get out a plastic animal or toy car they can dip in. We keep a napkin nearby for at first, but soon the kids don't care about the mess.
- **Water and cornstarch**

### Scents:

- Take out the spice jars and smell 'em!
- Let your child smell the vanilla, lemon, garlic etc. that you're cooking with.
- Drip some scents onto cotton balls or paper towel bits (Use scents such as vanilla, lemon, vinegar, almond extract; basically anything that can be transferred to a cotton ball.) Make two of each scent and have your child match up the scents

**Water:** Warm water is calming for these activities.

- **Bath time**
- **Finger paint the tub-** A natural extension of bath time, or a way to extend bath time: give blobs of finger paint on the tub side and have the kids paint the sides. It cleans up right down the drain.
- **Car or dolly wash-** Have the kids grab a few of their toy cars or dolls and put soap in the bathroom sink. Use rags or sponges to give the toys a bath.
- **Wash dishes-** Set up a stool at the kitchen counter and let them wash, (or rewash if you've got no dirties at the moment)
- **Blowing bowl bubbles-** Get out the largest mixing bowl you have and fill it part way with water. Add a splurt of dish soap and get out the straws and show how to blow out to make bubbles. Once you have a mountain of bubbles you can do fun things like blowing into a bubble and making it bigger or hiding a toy under the bubbles. Blowing can be a very calming activity for kids
- **Water play on the kitchen floor-**Towel on the floor with bowls and scoopers. Add food coloring to the water to make it extra exciting.
- **Sponges-** Get out bowls and a sponge to transfer water from one bowl to the other- lots of good SQUEEZING. Add soap for bubbles
- **Mop the floor-** Give kids rags to 'ice skate' on to dry

### Indoor gross-motor activity toys:

**Rody Pony** or a hopping ball that has a handle on a big bouncy ball

**Mini Trampoline-** bounce bounce

**Bilibo-**a toy that encourages spinning, rocking and pretend play.

**Ikea Swing** or other indoor swing

**Sit 'n' Spin**

**Couches-** for forts or indoor obstacle courses with the cushions

**Large Tube of Knit Fabric-** Two and a half to three yards of tubular knit fabric for crawling through, pushing a ball through, laying in and stretching with arms and legs, and if you have a smaller child swinging your child in.



Take note of what is calming for your child and what they crave so you can know how to help them get centered when they seem out of control. With creativity you can do a "sensory activity" anywhere. Include a variety of sensory activities throughout your day for a more even keeled child.

Finally, never underestimate the value of a good hug for every sense.

**Sensory Snacks-** Use descriptive words to talk about the foods you're eating. You can ask, "Is it sour? Bitter?" and so on.

- Eat something with interesting texture: chewy, crunchy or maybe silky or smooth
- Have a tasting with a few different foods (whatever is on your snack plate at the moment is fine.) Ask questions like, "Which food here tastes salty? Which ones are sweet? What does this food make you think about? "
- Make up a toothpick snack (or a whole dinner if you want to be your kids hero.) where every thing is in cubes to be stabbed. If you have large tongs these can be fun for this snack too.

**Spreading-** any of the following on crackers, tortillas, fruit or bread.

- Nut Butter
- Butter
- Cream Cheese
- Jam
- Try finger painting with pudding if you're not opposed to sticky-ness.

**Straws-** Mouth work can be amazingly centering for kids. These aren't big activities in themselves, but can be a good thing to include in a snack or meal time.

- Drink a smoothie or milkshake through a straw
- Drink yogurt or apple sauce or pudding through a straw- Oh how thrilling!
- Use a little coffee straw or a narrower-than-usual curly straw to drink water or juice

**Cutting-** To teach my kids to cut I have them put all their fingers together and hold their hand, "straight as a board" and place it on the back of the knife. The other hand holds the knife handle. In this way they can push the blade through the food and keep all body parts whole and attached. For food with a round edge such as carrots I slice off one side so they don't roll.

**Practice Cutting:**

- Carrots, celery, potatoes (for older kids)
- Avocados, bananas, cheese, bread, squash, cooked chicken (for younger kids, with a butter knife or plastic knife)
- Make a soup, stew or curry that involves chunks of food and let your little one dump their cut ingredients in to the pot- so exciting to REALLY be contributing to the family meal.

**Cookie Cutters-** Most food is more exciting cut into a fun shape, and pressing down to cut out shapes is a good 'heavy work' activity for kids. What all to cut?

- Cookies, naturally...
- Sandwiches
- Cheese crisps (quesadillas)
- Slices of fruit or cheese (with mini cookie cutters)

**Mashing:**

- Potatoes or yams
- Cooked apples or pears
- Butter and sugar or butter and flour for baking- kids love using the dough cutter to moosh butter
- Roll out cookie dough with a rolling pin
- To make small pieces of nuts, candy, or crumbs put ingredients in a plastic bag and let you child roll with a rolling pin or bottle.