

## Calming Activities

Use these activities to help your child to feel calm and safe.

### Deep pressure

- **Therapy Ball**

Have your child lie face down on a carpet floor, or use a mat/thick blanket if no carpet is available. Then, starting at their toes, roll a therapy ball over their legs all the way up to their shoulders. **Do not roll over their head.**

As you roll, press down so that you are squashing them. Ask your child if they like it; some children will ask for more or for you to press more firmly. If your child doesn't speak, watch their reactions closely.

Once you roll the ball up to their shoulders, roll it back down to their feet and repeat if they have indicated that they would like more. Ensure your child is comfortable with that weight and continually check on them.



- **Beanbag**

You can also provide similar input with 'beanbag squashes' or 'cushion squashes'. With the child lying face down on the carpet or mat, use a beanbag or large cushion at the bottom of their legs and press firmly on it for 3-5 seconds, then release and slowly work your way up their body

### Rocking

Rocking targets the vestibular system, the sensory system that tells your body where you are in space and how you are moving and greatly contributes to your sense of balance. Rocking can be very calming, especially if it is slow and rhythmic. Use a rocking chair or sit them on a big cushion. If the child is small enough, you could also have them on your lap. To calm a child rock slowly and consistently. Try to eliminate other sensory distractions such as loud noises. Adding a weighted cushion or lap blanket can also be helpful.



### Light-up and Visual Toys

Simple and soothing light toys can encourage the visual system in children who have vision. Pairing the lights with music can also have a calming effect on children. Other visual toys provide a point of focus for a child and help them to concentrate on one thing, reducing their level of arousal.

Try using visual input to reach a calming state with:

- Light up toys (particularly if you have a dark room the child can go to)
- Strings of beads such as those used to decorate Christmas trees.
- Mirror & torch.
- Liquid motion toys (look on Pinterest for ideas on how to make your own).
- Sand timers.
- Kaleidoscopes (look on Pinterest for ideas on how to make your own).



### Vibrating toys

Vibrating toys such as pull-string animal toys or a vibrating soft toy can be calming if placed on a child's lap.



### Music and sounds

Auditory input can be either calming or alerting, depending on the type of sound and the situation. Listen to your child's favourite music or use:

- Rainmaker toys
- Bubblewrap for 'rustling' and 'popping'.
- Music boxes.
- CDs of different sound types e.g. relaxation music, whale noise, white noise, classical music etc. Enable your child to change the volume of this music or turn it off, so that they have control.



Singing a familiar song or nursery rhyme to or with your child is very calming and a lovely way to engage with your child. This can work well when paired with rocking or deep pressure activities above.

### Blowing bubbles

This can be a calming activity for a child because it focuses them on one thing. If you blow the bubbles, they can enjoy popping them, or they can try blowing bubbles themselves.



### Scents

Scents engage the olfactory system. You can place scented oils or extracts on a cotton ball or piece of felt and insert into a ziplock bag or small container with holes in the lid. You'll be able to smell through the bag or container without getting oils or extracts on clothing. Some scents (lavender, rose, vanilla) can be calming, while others (citrus, mint, cinnamon) can be alerting. Try to pair calming scents with calming activities, like bath time or bed time, and alerting scents with alerting activities, like getting up in the morning.

