

What is Proprioception and Why Is It Important?

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Proprioception is often known as the sixth sense, as it is a sense that is not commonly known. To put it simply, proprioception is the sense that tells the body where it is in space. It's very important to the brain, as it plays a large role in self-regulation, co-ordination, posture, body awareness, the ability to focus and speech. Proprioception is the sense that lets us know where our different body parts are, how they move and how much strength our muscles need to use. We receive proprioceptive input from our sensory receptors located in our skin, muscles and joints. Playing the piano, handwriting, and playing sport are all activities that require a lot of proprioceptive input.

When receptors known as proprioceptors are stimulated, the arousal centre of the brain is provided with information about our movements and body position. Within this system, there are three major components of the brain, which interact and impact a child's level of alertness (the cortex, limbic system and cerebellum). Therefore, by providing children with proprioceptive input throughout the day they can be assisted to maintain an optimal state for learning and focused attention.

Proprioception activities can either be heavy muscle work activities or activities that apply deep pressure to the muscle and joints. Heavy work activities involve pushing, pulling, carrying heavy objects and weight-bearing, such as, carrying a pile of heavy books or doing a wheelbarrow walk. An example of a deep pressure activity would be giving your child a tight hug or your child hugging themselves into a tight ball. These activities can provide children with a strategy to be calm, focused and ready to participate.