

The Proprioceptive Sensory System

A resource booklet



What is the Proprioceptive Sensory System?

The proprioceptive system helps us understand:

- Where our body is
- How our body moves
- How much force to use

It comes from muscles, joints and tendons and gives the brain constant feedback about body position and movement.

This system helps children:

- Know where their body is without looking
- Use the right pressure when holding objects
- Feel grounded and secure in their body

How Proprioceptive Differences May Look in Autistic & SEN Children

Children may be proprioceptive seeking or under-responsive:

Proprioceptive Seeking may look like:

- Crashing into furniture or people
- Enjoys rough play or tight hugs
- Chews on clothes or objects
- Uses too much force when playing
- Stomps, jumps or slams doors

Proprioceptive Under-Awareness

- Appears clumsy or uncoordinated
- Difficulty judging personal space
- Drops objects often
- Uses too little force (weak grip)
- Appears tired or floppy

These behaviours are often the body asking for feedback, not attention-seeking.

Why Proprioceptive Support Is So Important

Proprioceptive input is one of the most regulating types of sensory input.

When supported, it can help with:

- Emotional regulation
- Calming the nervous system
- Focus and attention
- Body confidence and safety

This is why it's often called "organising input."

Ways to Support Proprioceptive Sensory Needs

Heavy Work Activities

(Activities that push, pull, lift or carry)

- Carrying shopping or books
- Pushing walls or furniture
- Pulling resistance bands
- Gardening or digging
- Moving chairs or cushions

Movement with Resistance

- Climbing
- Animal walks (bear, crab, frog)
- Tug-of-war
- Obstacle courses
- Wheelbarrow walks

Deep Pressure Input

- Bear hugs (with consent)
- Weighted lap pads or blankets
- Squeezing cushions or therapy balls
- Rolling up tightly in a blanket
- Massage or firm touch

Everyday Proprioceptive Support

- Helping with chores
- Kneading dough or playdough
- Building with heavy blocks
- Chewy or crunchy snacks
- Carrying backpacks (appropriately weighted)

At Autism Explorers, proprioceptive needs are supported through:

- Pushing or pulling activities
- Fine and gross motor activities
- Child-led movement
- Practical, meaningful tasks

These activities help children feel safe, grounded and regulated.