

Sense of body position

(Proprioception)

Working with the vestibular sense is the sense of proprioception, which provides us with an awareness of body position in space without looking at it.

Information provided from our muscles, joints and ligaments provides us with an awareness of where our body parts are in relation to each other. This information is given when our body is squashed, stretched or pulled apart during movement.

When this system is working effectively it assists us to know where our body parts are in relation to each other and in relation to the immediate space around us. It also lets us know how to move our body and how much force we need to use to carry out a task.

When proprioception is processed well, an individual's body position is automatically adjusted and this helps with every aspect of our day e.g. negotiating our way around objects in a room or preventing us from falling out of a chair. Proprioception also allows objects such as pencils, buttons, spoons and combs to be used by the hand with appropriate force; to pick up a drink of water without spilling it or squeezing too hard or too softly.

The proprioceptive system also has another role – it helps us to stay calm so that we can attend and focus.

Signs of difficulty relating to the proprioceptive system

What you may observe	Possible solutions to try
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appears over forceful perhaps damaging toys unintentionally.• The child may bump into or trip over items or people more than you would expect• Falling from chairs.• Poor fine motor skills compared to peers – difficulties with precision movements.• May have poor body awareness.• Stands close to or leans into others• Seeks to put or squash themselves into small spaces or pushes against corners of the room	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Think of active activities that involve increased effort such as pushing and pulling i.e. moving furniture, pushing a full shopping trolley• Think of activities that involve a lot of moving and using effort e.g. of activities include: helping with jobs around the house, carrying objects, pushing heavy doors, gardening, pushing wheelie toys, swimming, trampolining, using playground equipment, running, cycling on a trike or bike, kneading dough or modelling with clay and tug of war.• Use praise and consider reward charts for help given.• Remember the jobs mentioned above can be very tiring so the secret is make it motivating for the child to participate little and often.• Create a 'fidget-box'. This is a box of objects such as squishy toys and allows the child to choose an object when they are finding it hard to concentrate or calm down. Make sure the child is able to use the object safely and appropriately.• Cardboard boxes – hiding, squeezing into, ripping apart, jumping on, pushing with toys in