

Using Your Therapy Ball

DESCRIPTION

A therapy ball is a great piece of equipment to invest in, as it is versatile and really simple to use. This programme will provide you with general ideas for what you can do with your therapy ball. You can adapt and apply these ideas to the specific needs of the children you may be working with.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

Improving Body Awareness:

Children with poor body awareness may often present as fidgety or distractable in the classroom. They sometimes appear uncoordinated and may have difficulty planning the way they want their body to move. A therapy ball can be used in the following ways to reinforce and gradually improve body awareness:

- Rolling Ball – Your child lies on the floor and another person (child or adult) rolls the ball over your child's body. Firm pressure should be applied, but not too hard. You might notice that deep pressure applied in this way will have a calming effect on your child. This can be useful if previous activities have left them excited/'high' and you need a strategy to begin to calm them down.



- Bouncing – sit on the therapy ball and bounce gently up and down (offering increased vestibular input). This activity can help if you want to raise a child's arousal levels if they feel sluggish or slow. You can help your child develop this activity by getting them to name their body parts as you roll the ball over them on their front and their back.
- Let your child have a go at rolling the ball over you.
- Push the ball against resistance e.g. with another child. The sensory input through the arms contributes to increased body awareness.
- Throw the therapy ball to another person (adult or child) who has to catch it. The throwing and catching provides good sensory feedback. Adapt this game by getting them to call out e.g. body parts when they catch/throw.



Improving Postural Motor Skills:

The child with poor postural strength and stability may present as slightly 'floppy' with balance difficulties. They may be easily tired by the demands of sitting up straight at their desk for much of the day. Other associated difficulties include reduced stability of the shoulders (this often leads to problems with handwriting development), or reduced pelvic stability (sometimes leading to slouching and poor posture whilst sitting).

Any therapy ball activity challenging the child to get into and maintain their body in different positions will benefit their posture, balance and stability. It is also good to have them bear their own weight through their arms and shoulders, as this will increase strength and stability at the shoulder girdle.

The following are good activity ideas:

- Your child lies on their tummy on the therapy ball. They wheelbarrow walk out using their hands and reach for objects in front of them.

You can adapt this game to have them play 'football' e.g. bat a ball through a goal using his/her hands whilst on the therapy ball. Another child can go in goal and they take turns.

- Your child lies with the small of their back on the therapy ball. See how many times they can use their tummy muscles to pull themselves up and reach for an object above them.
- Sit on a therapy ball and another person (adult or child) wobbles them. They have to adjust their body to stay on the ball
- Sits on a chair or therapy ball. They have to stay seated whilst reaching to push another therapy ball forward – ensure they reach forward from their shoulders. Adapt this by having your child sit on the floor and push the therapy ball with their feet.

- Musical Statues – your child sits and bounces on the ball, then freezes when the music stops. See what different shapes they can make when the music stops e.g. reaching up, down to the side.
- Standing with their back to the wall, roll a ball up a wall to above shoulder height. See if they can control the ball to move a few steps along, and then bring the ball back down to the ground without dropping it.
- Pretend the ball is a paintbrush and use it to paint imaginary rainbows – your child chooses a colour, 'dips' the ball in the paint and paints an imaginary arc, starting on the floor to one side, then reaching up, over their head and down to the other side.
- Your child sits on the therapy ball and picks imaginary stars – reaching up high, out to the side and across the body, then bends to put each one in an imaginary bucket on the floor.

