COMMUNITY PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AND PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

CALMING TECHNIQUES

The environment needs to be quiet and calm with minimal distractions and if possible subdued lighting. Please ensure all activities are carried out in a slow, calm manner and with the child's consent.

- Listening to quiet music in a quiet room for 5 minutes or reading a book in a quiet room.

- Provide a quiet, safe space for the child to retreat to.

- Encourage the child to put their hands next to them on the chair and push through their hands to lift the bottom off the chair.

- Try pushing hands together palm to palm at chest level and press hard.

- Try asking the child to bend their elbows, rest their forearms on the table, and lean forwards so that some of the body weight is felt through the upper limbs.

- Hard slow stamping/clapping.

- Ask child to stretch slowly as far as is possible and then crouch into a tiny ball.

- 'Press ups' against the wall, ensure feet stay still and child takes a lot of their bodyweight through the arms.

- Use a stress ball or playdough and squeeze and release slowly. Repeat 10 times.

- Whilst sitting practise, encourage to take a deep breath in and slow breath out. If this is difficult talk about blowing the breath out.

- Ask child to sit on chair and place hands on edge of chair and pull up the chair as through it was possible to lift the seat.

- Ask the child to give themselves a bear hug.

- Get the child to wear a heavy backpack with appropriate weight for the child e.g. no more than 10% of the child's body weight.

- Use a sheet on their bed and tuck them in tightly – ensure they can easily remove if needed.

- Try sucking a sweet.

- Suck a thick drink e.g. thick milkshake, yoghurt drink through a straw.

- Use dimed lighting; avoid bright lights and flashing lights.

- Use lists, timetables – written/visual, and routines so that the child isn't unduly surprised at the days events. It may also give them a sense of control.

- Outlining – your therapist will explain.

- Provide a place where the young person can take themselves for time out, for example a small tent or cabin bed.   Young people affected by sensory sensitivity often find dark and enclosed spaces calming.

- Avoid visual and auditory stimulation that is not necessary.

- Paint the young person's room soft, pastel colours and put dark blinds or lined curtains on windows to prevent light distracting the young person.

- If possible, situate the young person's room in a quiet corner of your house.

- Give your young person 'heavy' tasks around the house, for example carrying the shopping, arranging tins on shelves.   This may have a calming and organising effect.

- Minimise clutter.

- Sharing a bedroom with a sibling can be difficult.   Clear boundaries may be helpful as can a 'timetable' for time in the bedroom for each young person.

- Try to structure the young person's time and consider introducing an 'activity schedule' to reduce anxiety.

- TV's/Games Consoles are alerting not calming!

- Hands on head and press down slowly.

- Tucking legs up and squeezing slowly.

- Giving themselves a hug.

- Squeezing and relaxing a small fidget toy.

- Squeezing and relaxing face and/or hands.

- Snuggling into a small space.

- Sucking a "sweet" sweet.

- Sucking yoghurt/thick milkshake through a straw.

- Bear hug.

- Walk after coming home from school (wick backpack on).

- Press ups or chair press ups regularly through the day e.g. before school, lunch time, after school.

- Allow chill out time, prior to homework in a daily routine.

- Help with moving furniture e.g. pushing sofa – relocating plant pots, vacuuming.

- Help with heavy manual tasks in the garden e.g. digging.

- Swimming.

- Make a list or organising a specific routine always helps to make us feel calmer. In particular after school or bed time routines will help to calm.

- The young person may be stimulated positively or negatively just by the environment around them. For all of us the light can be too bright, the room too noisy, the glare of the dun too dazzling, affecting how we feel.

Try out these techniques and use those that are most successful/effective.