

COMMUNITY PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AND PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Self Regulation

Even young Children can start to learn what they need to do to self regulate. Self regulation is what adults do naturally by choosing foods, drinks, times and types of exercise and activities such as crafts or sport as hobbies.

If your are feeling sleepy at work you will get up and get a drink, may be just cold water, or hot coffee with caffeine in, both the moving around and the drink you choose are alerting and are your personal way of self regulating.

If the light from a window or noise is bothering you, you will move or draw a curtain or stop the noise, again you have self regulated because if the irritation continued you would start to become distressed and possibly angry. This would be behaviour in the “Too High” zone.

For children with sensory processing difficulties everyday experiences can cause them to become distressed and angry.

The first thing is to start and consider where your child fits at that moment of time on the scale that goes “Too low”, “Just Right”, “Too High”.




“Too Low” behaviour is sleepy, seems tired, lethargic, does not hear what is said or appear to notice what is going on, or just slow to do what is needed and process what has been asked of them.

(Sometimes when a child is tired or starting to be ill, the “too low” brain will try to fight this low feeling with extreme behaviour. You see it with young children at parties when they suddenly start running around, dancing wildly and generally seem over excited but as soon as they are in the car or bed they go fast asleep.) This particular behaviour can be difficult to judge but you know your child well and are likely to recognise it if you see it.

“Just Right” behaviour is seen as attentive, listening, wanting to learn able to function and do what is required at the time.

“Too high” behaviour can be angry, stressed/ distressed, withdraws and hides away, cries or hysterical type giggling and laughing, “giddy” behaviour.


N.B. Deep pressure such as massage, push/pull activities and heavy muscle work such as digging in a garden or pushing a wheel barrow are levelling, carrying some thing heavy. These will calm someone down and wake someone up and they don't over stimulate. So where ever possible use deep pressure activities to help your child.

DIFFICULTY	IDEAS TO TRY
<p data-bbox="204 271 724 338">Child is too low and doesn't seem to want to do anything.</p>   	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="906 271 1382 524">• Try alerting drinks and foods Crunchy foods, spicy and salty, sour and tart flavours are all alerting experiment with you child. Ask them does this make you feel more awake? <li data-bbox="906 533 1374 636">• Cold things tend to alert such as ice cream or an ice lolly to suck on. <li data-bbox="906 645 1382 819">• Sports style drinks bottles, and straws provide deep pressure as well as the cold drink which also helps to both calm and alert. <li data-bbox="906 828 1382 1227">• Take them for a brisk walk, if you can go by the park include some climbing and swinging. Things that involve deep pressure such as climbing up the slide the wrong way, pushing someone else on the swing, are particularly good as these types of weight bearing activities don't over stimulate. <li data-bbox="906 1236 1374 1525">• Linear activities such as swinging, scooters, bicycles, skate boards are all alerting But if done for too long can over stimulate. If your child is one who will do this, use a timer to encourage them to only do it for set time. <li data-bbox="906 1534 1382 1675">• Explaining to your child how swinging for too long makes them get "too high", can help them learn about themselves. <li data-bbox="906 1684 1382 1899">• If they have done this then get them to use the climbing frame for a while to help them come down again, or push against a wall sustained deep pressure is calming. <li data-bbox="906 1908 1331 2038">• This can be as simple as having two stress balls for them to squeeze in each hand.

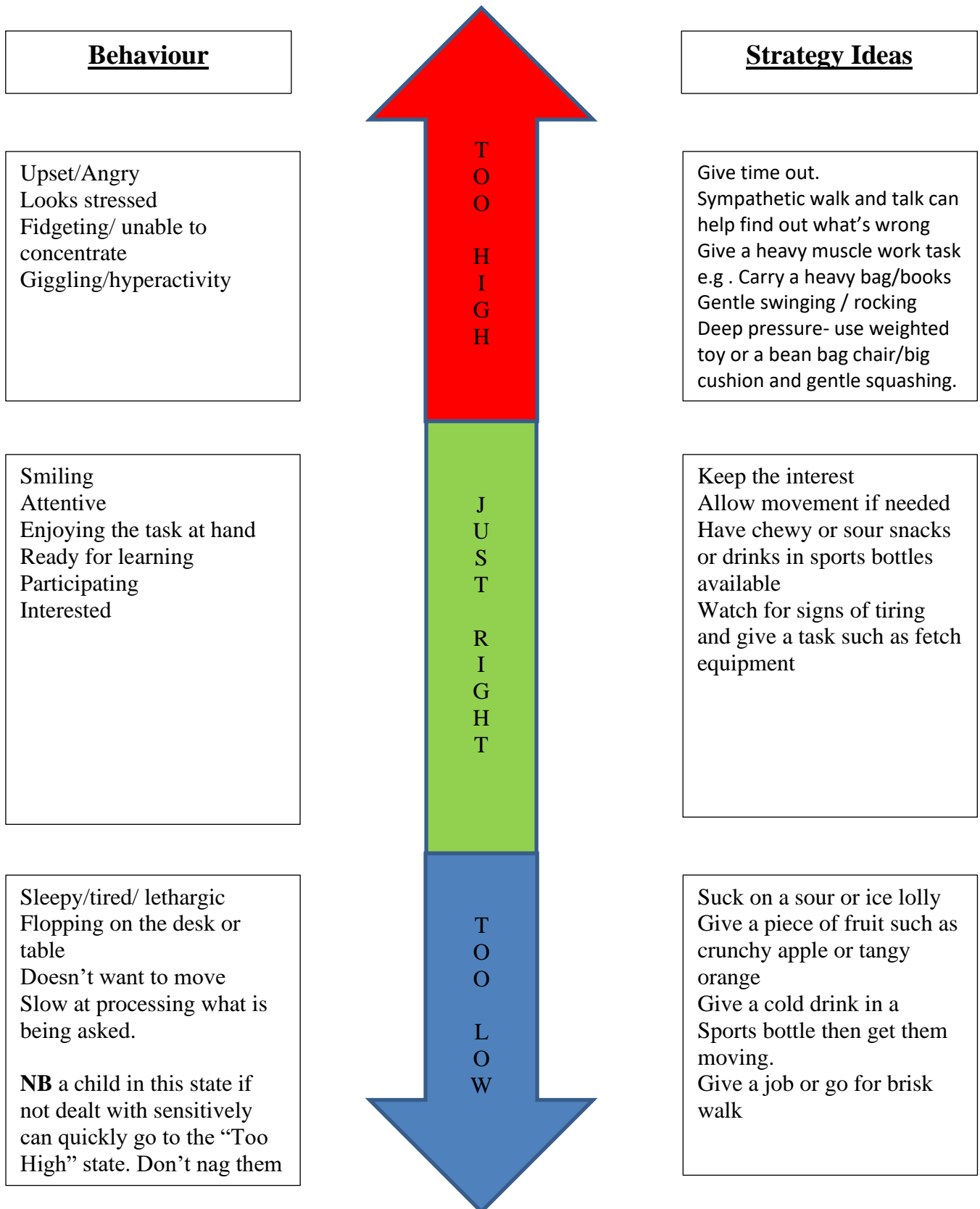
My child gets home from school in a stressed state.



- Ensure they have food and drink ready for them when they come home or even take to school to them if needed.
- Have a drink in a sports bottle, the sucking is calming.
- Use weighted toy, neck wrap or lap pad to provide deep pressure when they come in and allow them to have quiet time if this suits them.
- Try not to organise activities straight after school.
- Some children want to come home and bounce on the trampoline or swing on the swing or use the shower. Let them this is their way of getting rid of the stress of the day.
- Use deep pressure massage such as rolling with a gym ball or a foot ball.
- **Rolling with a Big Ball**
Use a gym ball. Ask the child to lie face down on a firm comfortable surface such as a carpeted floor or gym mat. Roll the ball over the back, shoulders and legs apply a small amount of pressure to the ball, ask the young person is this nice? If no stop. With smaller children use the smaller ball below.
Children will usually say if they want more or less pressure, but check they are OK.
- **Smaller ball Massage**
Use a smaller football sized ball. Again ask the child to lie facedown on a comfortable firm surface, use the ball on the back. Use the ball with your hand flat on top of it and rotate it in small circles over the surface of the back and shoulders, work around the sides of the hips and, up and down each leg focus the pressure on the big muscles.
- A tennis ball can be used in this way to massage the soles of the

	<p>feet or as shown.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep pressure techniques should never be used on the front of the abdomen, only arms, legs and back. • Use a weighted toy, belt or rucksack filled with books or milk containers full of sand or water equivalent to 10% of the child's body weight to help them feel more secure.
<p>When your child is calm, experiment with different smells, foods, fabrics and massage techniques and activities but not all at once, and find out what helps them to feel more alert or calm. Knowing this can really help them to learn to help themselves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A piece of smooth ribbon or furry fabric, or a smooth stone in their pocket to fiddle with can help them feel calmer. • Some lavender or a camomile tea bag in a little plastic bag to sniff at. • There so many different types of massager it really is about looking around and finding what suits your child.
<p>Don't forget daily activities such as bringing in the shopping, pushing the vacuum cleaner, polishing and dusting, Cleaning out animals, brushing the dog, and walking the dog. Changing bedding and hanging out laundry. Gardening and baking by hand all involve some heavy muscle work. Encourage your child to take part and learn important life skills at the same time.</p>	

The Alert Scale



NAME:

DATE:

Ideas to try	Outcome
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

The Paediatric Therapy Team would like to acknowledge the Alert Chart is based on the How does your engine run? The Alert Programme by Mary Sue Williams and Sherry Shellenberger.