S T R E T C H *Your Child's Passions Using Sensory Activities*

Carol Stock Kranowitz, M.A.

Author: *The Out-of-Sync Child, The Out-of-Sync Child Has Fun,* and *The Out-of-Sync Child Grows Up.*
www.out-of-sync-child.com

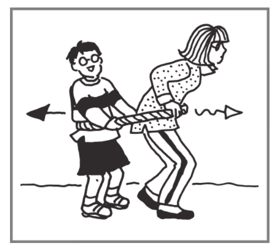
Co-author (with J. Newman): *Growing an In-Sync Child, The In-Sync Activity Card Book,*
and *A Year of Mini-Moves for the In-Sync Child.*
www.insyncchild.com

~~~~~~

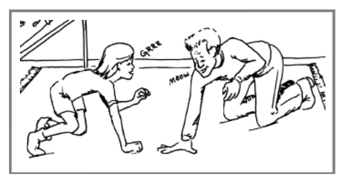
"Honor passion wherever you find it." (T. Berry Brazelton, M.D.)

Whatever the Child's Favorite Theme Is — Use It!

Move Like It (vestibular, proprioceptive, tactile, visual)



Bus Driver
Materials: Bicycle inner tube
Do: With a friend, step inside tube. Place tube at waist line. Vroom, vroom!



Animal Walk
Materials: Instrumental music or drum
Do: Creep, slither, hop, gallop, stomp, arch.

Weather Dance
Materials: Instrumental music or drum
Do: Twirl like a tornado and land in pillow pile.
or, Fall gently to the floor, like rain or snow.

Dinosaur Obstacle Course (see page 5)
Materials: Boards, big blocks, traffic cones, cartons, sawhorses, gym mats, flour
Do: Set up outdoor obstacle course.
Or, set up **Video Game Obstacle Course** (page 8).
~~~~~~

Eat It (gustatory, olfactory, tactile, visual)

Construction Snacks

Materials: Pretzel sticks & cheese cubes or marshmallows

Do: Make RR track, robot, geometric shape, bridge

Pizza Numbers

Materials: Pizza dough

Do: Mold wads of dough into numbers, shapes, people, animals

Planets on a Plate

Materials: Pea, chickpea, melon ball, radish, potato, etc.

Do: Arrange spheres, in order, on the plate.

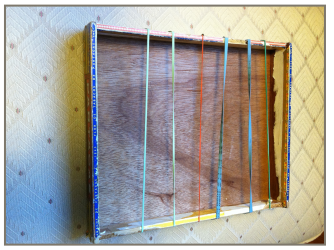
Circle Salad (page 9)

Build It (visual, tactile, vestibular, proprioceptive)

Box Structure

Materials: Boxes

Do: Make a box city, a train, a monster, or an "astromech droid"



Tune It (auditory, tactile)

Rubber Band Harp

Materials: Cigar box and elastic bands

Do: Remove box lid. Stretch elastic bands across "guitar" to strum and tune.

Sing It, Clap It, Chant It (auditory, vestibular)

Railroads *I've Been Working on the Railroad*

Civil War *When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again*

Animals *Down by the Bay*

Planets *The Planet Song*

And, of course, Read All About It!

SENSORY-MOTOR ACTIVITIES ~ IDEA SHEET

Child's Theme:

Move Like It:

Eat It:

Build It:

Sing It, Clap It, Chant It:

Read All About It:

Use Fixations as Motivation

Temple Grandin, PhD
www.autism.com/advocacy_grandin

Today I have a successful career designing livestock equipment because my high school science teacher, Mr. Carlock, used my fixation on cattle chutes to motivate me to study psychology and science. While the school psychologist wanted to take my squeeze machine away, Mr. Carlock encouraged me to read scientific journals so I could learn why the machine had a relaxing effect. When I moved to Arizona for graduate school, I went out to the feedlots to study the reactions of the cattle in squeeze chutes. This was the beginning of my career.

Today I travel all over the world designing stockyards and chutes for major meat-packing firms. If the psychologists had been successful in taking away my squeeze machine, maybe I would be sitting somewhere rotting in front of a TV instead of writing this chapter.

Many of my fixations initially had a sensory basis. In the fourth grade, I was attracted to election posters because I liked the feeling of wearing the posters like a sandwich man. OTs have found that a weighted vest will often reduce hyperactivity.

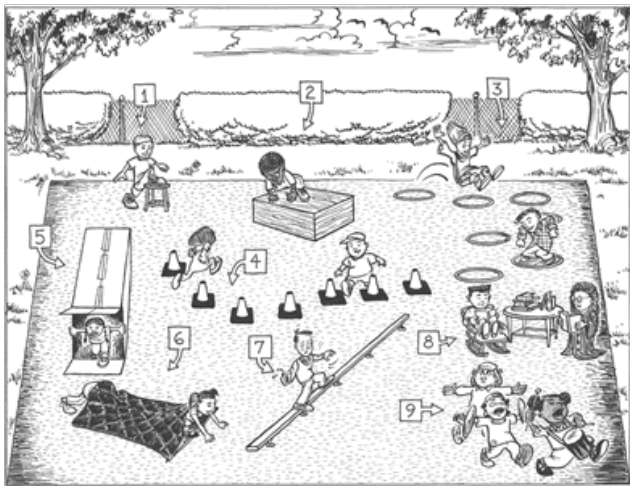
Even though the poster fixation started out with a sensory basis, I became interested in the election. My teachers should have taken advantage of my poster fixation to stimulate an interest in social studies. Calculating electoral college points would have motivated me to study math. Reading could have been motivated by having me read newspaper articles about the people on the posters. If a child is interested in vacuum cleaners, then use a vacuum-cleaner instruction book as a text.

Another one of my fixations was automatic glass sliding doors. Initially I was attracted to the doors because I liked the sensation of watching them move back and forth. Then gradually the doors took on other meanings.

In a high-functioning adolescent, an interest in sliding doors could be used to stimulate science interests. If my teacher had challenged me to learn how the electronic box that opened the door worked, I would have dived head first into electronics.

Fixations can be tremendous motivators. Teachers need to use fixations to motivate instead of trying to stamp them out. A narrow, fixated interest needs to be broadened into constructive activities.

For Fun and Function: The Obstacle Course, of Course!



Fish gotta swim, birds gotta fly, and kids gotta climb, jump and balance. While dangling from banisters, scooting under turnstiles, teetering on curbs, and jumping into puddles may dismay grown-ups, children persist with good reason.

How do kids learn to think and relate to the world around them? By scanning their surroundings; touching wooden, metal, rubber, or concrete surfaces; grasping and releasing handholds; changing body positions; maintaining equilibrium; and experimenting with different movement patterns. And, they are having fun!

An obstacle course is sensational, both to provide fun and to promote praxis. Praxis, a sensory-based process, involves:

- Ideation (having an idea of something you want to do)
- Motor planning (figuring how to do it)
- Execution (carrying out the plan)

The person who builds and moves through his own obstacle course strengthens praxis many times over.

You and your child can build an obstacle course outdoors, where everything is better, or indoors in bad weather. You don't need special equipment just a fresh way of looking at ordinary objects, with an eye on how they can promote sensory processing.

What to Do:

1) Brainstorm, or ideate, with your kids and encourage them to tell or show you what they have in mind. This step is great for kids who are old enough to help. You can always do it on your own if your child isn't ready to participate in this step. Make three lists of "ingredients" with these headings: *Ways to Move*, *Prepositions,* and *Objects.*

Ways to Move	***Prepositions***	***Objects***
Step	Into	Shoe boxes
Creep on all fours	Below	Table
Walk	Beside	Lines of masking tape
Roll	Over	Plush rug
Crawl on belly	Through	Tunnel
Hop	Across	Mattress
Jump	On	Bubble wrap
Scoot	Around	Wastebaskets
Leap	Between	Paper plates
Slither	Under	Chairs
March	On top of	Telephone books
Stomp	In and out of	Hoops

2) Together, plan the course by mixing and matching ingredients. It is *very important to vary* movements, prepositions, and objects! Variations reinforce children's ability to handle and discriminate different materials (tactile sense), stretch muscles and develop body awareness (tactile/proprioceptive sense), balance and move through space (vestibular sense), perceive spatial relationships and negotiate around obstacles (visual-motor skills), and improve motor planning, coordination and postural responses (sensory-based motor skills).

3) Execute the plan by laying out the course. In tight spaces, such as a hallway, a linear course is okay for one or two kids. In the yard or cleared room a circular course is best for a crowd. And, of course, let youngsters help! Remember that the heavy work of lifting, carrying, pushing, and pulling materials into place is functional fun.

Soon you will see that obstacle courses can be everywhere you look, indoors and out. Set a dining room chair in the doorway for the kids to climb over or crawl under as they come for a meal. Place that same chair in the hallway for them to jump around on the way to the bathroom. Or place two for them to alternate over and under on their way out the door.

Naturally, outdoors can present the perfect obstacle course. Ready-made obstacles include hills for running or rolling up (try it!) and down, puddles for jumping into or over, rocks to walk between or balance on, trees to go around, and branches to crawl under.

Be vigilant about safety. Allow sufficient space between obstacles for the child to readjust his posture before moving to the next. Always be there.

Suggestions:

- Have the kids go barefoot, or backwards, or with music.
- Suggest adverbs to encourage variation in the quality of the child's movement, such as quietly, gently, softly, angrily, noisily, quickly, slowly.
- Incorporate concepts such as *direction* by adding arrows, and *rhythm* by using a metronome.
- Incorporate your child's favorite theme. Does he love dinosaurs? Designate obstacles as caves, swamps, and mountains…. Trains? Pretend that obstacles are the locomotive, freight car, caboose…. Is ballet her thing? Have her twirl through the course, wearing a tutu.
- For a group, have everyone travel in the same direction to avoid traffic jams.
- Prior to a happy birthday party, practice building and going through a course with your child so she feels in-the-know and ready to help her friends if they get stuck.

To give children the chance to master new physical challenges, learn problem-solving skills and develop praxis, make an obstacle course every day! Build it, and they will come.

From *The Out-of-Sync Child Has Fun*, p. 297
Activity idea from Janet Wright, OTR/L

Video Game Obstacle Course (Motor Planning, Visual)

Janet Wright Stafford says, "I find that many children have a favorite video game that motivates them, so we try to re-create this in a 3-D obstacle course in the clinic, where the kids can act out the roles that capture their interest."

DEVELOPMENTAL AGE Middle schoolers

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Various pieces of gross motor, fine motor, and oral motor supplies, such as hoops, tunnels, balance beams, inner tubes, tweezers, rice bins, whistles, straws, cotton balls, paper scraps, etc.
- A large space to safely set up an obstacle course.
- Your shared imagination and creativity!

PREPARATION

- Familiarize yourself with characters from the video game.
- Create pictures of the characters to hang from the ceiling or tape to the wall for targets.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Interact with the child throughout the game by becoming one or more of the characters in the game.
- Participate in the obstacle course and act out the scene while your child describes the action.

WHAT YOUR CHILD CAN DO

- Join you in creating the scenes, by helping to set up the course according to a favorite video game screen.
- Blow cotton balls or small bits of paper at the targets.

VARIATIONS

- To increase the challenge of the activity, have the child advance to different levels of the game, which provide increased difficulty.
- Ask other children to join in as various characters from the game.
- Have children start in various places of the game, to develop their sequencing abilities.
- Encourage children to create their own video game and act it out in the large gym area. They may also enjoy drawing pictures of their game when they have finished creating it.

CIRCLE SALAD

by Carol Stock Kranowitz

(*Sensory Focus* magazine, Summer 2014)

Does your child love shapes and geometric figures?

This recipe is for kids ages 7 and up (Note: Some children younger than 7 can handle a kitchen knife well, and some children regardless of age cannot. You know your child best, so please use your own judgment!)

What You Need

Sharp, round-tip kitchen knife

Large cutting board

Vegetables:

- Yellow squash, zucchini, and peeled cucumbers (easy-to-slice for children with low tone, low stamina, or poor motor coordination)
- Carrots, unpeeled cucumbers, onions, scallions, radishes, grape tomatoes, and olives (requiring more motor-planning, strength or dexterity)

What You Do

1. Slice vegetables into circles.
2. Mingle all the pretty circles in a bowl and serve with your favorite dressing.

Helps Your Child Develop and Enhance …

- Motor planning (for using kitchen tools)
- Laterality (for using two hands in different ways to accomplish a task)
- Social relationships (for being part of a team and helping to feed a group)
- Can-do spirit (for trying new activities and perhaps new foods)
- Nutrition (for nourishing the body as well as the central nervous system)

- Integration of all eight sensory systems (and even picky eaters use six senses):
  - Tactile Hands manipulate the vegetables, developing touch discrimination and fine-motor skills
  - Proprioceptive Hands, arms and upper body get into correct position to push the knife through the vegetables, developing appropriate force
  - Vestibular Body is upright and stable, improving balance; muscles needed to handle the food and tool are engaged, improving muscle tone and stamina
  - Visual Eyes see the vegetables, hands, and knife, improving visual discrimination and visual-motor coordination
  - Auditory Ears hear the knife touching the board, improving auditory discrimination
  - Olfactory Nose smells the vegetables, improving what the nose knows and stimulating the appetite
  - Gustatory Mouth tastes the Circle Salad, increasing foods the child will eat
  - Interoceptive Internal organs digest the food, improving general health

Ways to Make It More Challenging

- Slant the knife to slice ovals for an Ellipse Salad
- Cube the vegetables to make a Block Salad
- Use a melon baller to scoop little orbs of watermelon, cantaloupe, and honeydew for a Sphere Salad
- Celebrate holidays with color-coordinated vegetables (green peppers, parsnips and carrots for St. Patrick's Day; broccoli, cauliflower, and tomatoes for Columbus Day)

What to Look for

- The child holds the vegetables firmly and has good control of the knife
- The child slices the vegetables in somewhat regular circles
- The work stays on the cutting board
- The child is engaged and having fun