

### Calming Strategies

These activities can help any child who is anxious, but are particularly useful for children who are sensory defensive. They help to relax the nervous system and can reduce exaggerated responses to sensory input.

- During carpet time allow child to lie on tummy with weighted cushion/blanket on back, or sit against a body pillow whilst listening to story, etc.
- Place hands on child's shoulders and apply deep pressure through them.
- Encourage self-imposed hugs or hugging a pillow tightly when anxious/upset or prior to an uncomfortable event.
- Body pressure – teach child to sit on the floor with knees bent up to chest, arms around knees and then squeeze themselves very tightly with eyes closed for one to two minutes. The same thing can be done sitting on a chair. Child puts hands underneath thighs and pushes down really firmly on chair seat. This reduces tension all the way up the arms and across the shoulders and back.
- “Time out” space, ideally enclosed quiet space (large box/pop-up tent) with beanbag chair inside is good escape from too much stimulation – child may enjoy lying over or under beanbag more than sitting on it.
- Back rub using deep pressure touch.
- Allow child to hold a large weighted pillow, i.e. wheat pillow on their lap during circle time/deskwork/messy play activities.
- Weighted lap snake - also good for wrapping around shoulders too (see equipment list).
- Slow rocking or swaying (rhythmic motion), i.e. have a rocking chair available in the classroom.
- Listen to soft and rhythmic music. Mozart and Vivaldi are thought to be calming and conducive to learning.
- Reduce noise and light levels.
- Provide hand squeeze, e.g. balloon filled with flour/ cornflour.
- Finger hugs and tugs.
- Sucking, i.e. milkshake through thin straw, sweets.
- Counting down – teach child to count themselves down from 10 – 1 before moving on to the next activity. Again the counting should be done fairly slowly and with eyes closed.