

Sensory Concepts

Swinging fun



Swings are a staple item in many backyards and parks and children often appear innately drawn to the calming motion of moving backwards and forth.

Swinging is a linear motion activity which stimulates our vestibular (movement) system in a calming way and provides organised information to our nervous system. In this way swinging can be a great activity for children who are overwhelmed and can benefit from some calming input.

Conversely, swings can also be used for spinning and therefore providing alerting input to our nervous systems. There is so much you can do with a swing: Here is a selection of swinging activities.

Firstly, having a swing doesn't mean that you need a commercially available swing set. If you have a tree, an old tyre and rope, then you have a potential swing.

There are many types of swings including:

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| Disc swings | Porch swings |
| Platform swings | Hammock swings |
| Sling swings | Duo swings |
| Cocoon swings | Bolster swings....the list goes on |

Watch your child for overstimulation, particularly if they are sensory sensitive. Counteract overstimulation with deep pressure, such as a bear hug.

What can you do with a swing?

Regular:

Regular front to back swinging is great fun and not only engages the vestibular and proprioceptive system, but encourages the development of coordination, balance and the integration of the senses.

Pull:

Create momentum by pulling on a rope.

This is particularly fun when lying on your stomach.

Pull and reach out for items such as a balls or toys placed within reach.

Push:

Use your feet to push off (either in sitting or on your stomach).

Reach forwards to push over a tower of large blocks or cardboard boxes to watch the building crash over.

Stand:

Who said swings were for sitting on, standing and swinging engages lots of muscle groups including postural muscles, legs and arms.

Stomach:

Lying on your stomach additionally works your postural muscles, especially those of your back. It also leaves your hands free to reach, push, and throw.

Like all other swinging activities, it also stimulates the visual cortex as the depth of perception is constantly changing.

Work on timing and planning to throw balls at a target at just the right time of the swing movement.

Together:

A favourite memory of playing with my children is swinging together, with one of them sitting on my lap as we pretended to be an aeroplane taking off, reclining the seat, climbing higher and coming into land.

Standing In front of a child as they swing also provides lovely time for eye contact and social engagement.

Twist:

If you watch most children you will soon find that they can experiment well with the different options swings can offer as they quickly find that spinning and twisting can be fun and alerting.

(This can be over alerting for some children, so watch them closely and change the activity if needed.)