How and When to Use Deep Pressure

For some people on the spectrum who may be on the cusp of a meltdown or shutdown, a reassuring touch from a parent or loved one can make a difference.

There is a form of therapy used by parents and therapists alike known as ‘Deep Pressure’. It can be applied in many ways, but what is it and why can it have such a positive effect on kids with autism and adults like? In this blog post, we take a closer look at Deep Pressure, revealing ways in which you, as a parent, can apply it.

What is it?
Deep Pressure is a therapy where touch or weight is used to help people who have sensory sensitivity. It uses pressure via touch to help someone who may need an intervention if they’re feeling stressed, anxious or overloaded. The therapy can be used on its own, or as part of a wider range of therapies.

It can be applied in two ways:

- Through touching someone by hugging or squeezing them
- By letting someone wear a weighted item of clothing, such as a vest
There are many scenarios where Deep Pressure can be used to help an autistic child feel better. Although it depends on the time of day, how bad they are feeling and whether or not they’re comfortable with each kind of therapy but knowing when and where it should be used is important.

One such scenario is when your child is feeling overloaded because there is too much sensory stimuli around. Using a classroom as an example, the lights might be too bright, there may be too many colors or images on the walls and background noise could be at its loudest. All this can lead to sensory overload, which is where Deep Pressure comes in.

Deep Pressure could also come into its own in other scenarios, such as:
- When sensory overstimulation comes from a single source
- If someone is feeling anxious about an upcoming event e.g. sports day at school
- When your child is feeling isolated and trying to exert deep pressure on themselves

**How it’s done**

For your child, one of the simplest ways of applying Deep Pressure therapy is by giving them a hug. It doesn’t have to be too tight but exerting a little pressure when embracing your son or daughter in their hour of need can make a big difference.

Another, less challenging means of applying Deep Pressure is by placing your hands on your child’s shoulders. This can be done with even a feather-light touch, but is ideal if your child isn’t too fond of being hugged or squeezed.

One of the most intense ways of using Deep Pressure via touch is massage. This can be done in many ways, using techniques such as Reiki, but can take a while to do in order to help your child feel okay again. There are tools you can use to help massage them, including body rollers, but they can be on the pricey side.

**Hands-free support**

For those people with autism who don’t like to be touched, there are other ways of using Deep Pressure therapy. One of them is to use weighted items of clothing, such as vests and jackets. Research done about the use of weighted vests found that it helped children with autism to improve their balance.

If weighted vests are a little too heavy and don’t do the job, there is a similar alternative. Pressure vests, also known as compression vests, are items of clothing which apply a small amount of pressure around the body, creating a similar effect to a hug without the touching element. They are made from tight, stretchable material like neoprene.

When they need to be left alone to de-stress, some autistic children can also experience deep pressure through wrapping themselves in a weighted blanket. As is sometimes the case with body rollers, some weighted blankets can be expensive, costing several hundred pounds each. They can help to keep your son or daughter grounded without being too intense.

**After it’s used**

The effects of Deep Pressure don’t appear straight away. To apply it, through touch or otherwise, it can take a while, from a few minutes to a few hours. Fortunately, once it registers with your child, they begin to feel a little calmer. Eventually, they should feel ready to get on with the rest of their day.

Having something to keep them in place can eventually help to restore some order in an autistic child’s life. They will feel as though everything will be under control with a little pressure to help offer some reassurance. However, you apply it, using this technique could make a big difference during meltdowns or when sensory overload reaches its peak. It can be adjusted if you don’t get it right straight away. Deep Pressure can be pretty easy to do after a little practice.

Reprinted from: www.bristolautismsupport.com
Strategies for Supporting Executive Functioning Needs

- Have homework written down in the same spot every day
- Explicitly teach executive functioning & study skills
- Give an extra 3-5 minutes to organize before transitions
- Schedule a weekly organization time
- Create routines and practice them often
- Incorporate movement during instruction
- Create an end-of-the-day checklist to remember materials
- Provide brain breaks during and after instruction
- Clearly explain academic & social expectations
- Keep an extra set of books at home and in the classroom
- Use countdowns & time checks during work periods
- Have students set up homework binders

Find more tips at: www.thepathway2success.com

Clipart by Kate Hadfield
Here are some things you need to know when it comes to dating someone with autism…

By: Kerry Magro

10. Just because we may want to be by ourselves at times doesn’t mean we don’t care about you.
Some of us want to unwind during a long day just like anyone else.

9. Eye contact may be difficult for us at times.
When we are having a conversation if I’m not looking at you right in the eyes don’t think I’m trying to give you the cold shoulder.

8. Ask me any question you have.
Although we may have difficulties with communication, we still need you to be as open with us as possible to avoid misunderstandings. Ask us questions early to avoid issues later.

7. If something goes over our head try to make me understand what you meant.
Sarcasm can sometimes go over our heads and when it does, know that we truly want to understand.

6. We can date people who aren’t on the autism spectrum.
Often a misconception is that people on the spectrum want to only date others who are on the spectrum. This couldn’t be farther from the truth. We just want to find someone we connect with and can be ourselves with.

5. If you’re shocked that I have autism don’t be.
Some people on the spectrum tend to fall on the line of an ‘invisible disability.’ That means if we are on a date you may not see any characteristics of autism on the surface but it doesn’t mean I’m not on the spectrum. Autism is a spectrum disorder.

4. If you go online before our date and find out I have autism don’t jump to conclusions.
See #5. Autism is a spectrum. I once went on a date and within the first 5 minutes she was already talking about how ‘Rain Man’ was her favorite movie…Interesting.

3. Help us understand what you are comfortable with when it comes to being intimate.
We aren’t mind readers so tell us when we may be going too fast or too slow. We will respect you even more for being honest with us, as people on the spectrum tend to be some of the most authentic people you will ever meet.

2. Give us time to process small or big-time decisions.
After we’ve been together for a while and decisions may arise, whether it be something small like trying a new restaurant or something bigger such as getting married or moving in together, understand that transitions can often be difficult at first for us to comprehend. This isn’t different for any human being on this planet. Sometimes transitions can tend to make us feel overloaded. Don’t feel discouraged. If it works out and we both care for each other we will make it work.

1. Love is love. No matter the person.
Love has no race, age, gender, religion, sexuality and disability. It’s the same with autism. Love is love no matter any differences we have in our lives.

Love me for the person I am and I’ll do the same with you.

Reprinted from: www.loveandautism.com
Steps to Make Your Own Glitter Jar

1. Start by finding a glass mason jar and allow your child to decorate it however they like. You can also use a plastic water bottle if you can’t find a mason jar.
2. You will also need one bottle of clear glue and some kind of glitter. Food coloring is optional.
3. Fill the bottle up 3/4 of the way with water. Next, add the clear glue and glitter and shake. You may want to use a funnel to get the glitter in the jar. You may add food coloring if desired. Seal the lid and you are ready to go.

Your child can SHAKE the jar or bottle when they feel anxious or upset and remain still while the glitter settles.

The jar is like the child's mind, and you can even encourage your child to think about how their thoughts are like the glitter. As the glitter settles down into the bottom of the jar, the mind becomes calmer as well.

AUTHOR: Koscinski, Cara, MOT, OTR/L

SUBJECT AREA: Occupational Therapy-Manuals

PUBLISHER: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

PUBLICATION DATE: 2013, 2016

NUMBER OF PAGES: 189

BY: Anne Carpenter

It is thought that the vast majority of children (and adults, too!) with ASD also have major sensory processing challenges such as being sensitive to sudden loud noises, bright lights in the school auditorium, or the smell of greasy food at a fast food restaurant. Occupational Therapy (OT) has been very helpful to kids with ASD, but parents and teachers need to know the ins and outs of OT and how to do it successfully.

Cara Koscinski’s book, The Parent’s Guide to Occupational Therapy for Autism and Other Special Needs, is not the newest kid on the block, but when I finally cracked open the book and started reading, I was impressed. This book is purported to be a pocket guide that a parent or teacher can carry in a purse or tote bag to refer to when needed. The author gets to the heart of the matter— the components of sensory processing, and an explanation of what Occupational Therapy is including Activities of Daily Living (ADL).

The first chapter gives advice on how to pick the right OT for one’s child and what to look for in a good therapist. Subsequent chapters go into the nitty-gritty of sensory processing and OT, including the Core Muscles and their function, feeding and oral-motor functioning, handwriting and the arm, the sensory systems, and much more! Each chapter delves into the subject in such a way as to make it interesting and easy to understand. At the end of each chapter there is an “Out of Pocket Activity,” that guides the reader toward the activity that serves to reinforce the concepts at hand and to give the reader hands-on experience. This is a clever way to reinforce the concepts and to help the parent or teacher to work with the child in a concrete way.

All the bases are covered and no stone is left unturned as the author gives a comprehensive A-Z look at all of the sensory challenges a child with ASD or a related condition could possibly experience. Not only sensory issues, but motor skills and toilet training are covered as well. Though this book came out a few years ago, it has been revised and the information can still be relevant for quite a while; parents and teachers owe it to themselves to check out this gem and see it for themselves!
## Signs of Slow Processing Speed

ilslearningcorner.com

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needs extra time to make decisions</td>
<td>Forgets to bring materials from home for school assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently overwhelmed with a task</td>
<td>Does not finish tests in allotted timeframes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has trouble starting homework</td>
<td>Struggles to take notes while the teacher is lecturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has difficulty finishing homework</td>
<td>Does not completes classwork at school (frequently brings home worksheets to finish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes a long time to complete homework</td>
<td>Finds difficulty in solving mental math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hates changes to routines</td>
<td>Doesn’t plan ahead for large school projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularly underestimates the time they need to complete a task</td>
<td>Lacks focus with reading and taking notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggles with trying any new foods</td>
<td>Tries to avoid multi-step math problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has difficulty recognizing how their behavior affects others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Special Thanks To:

General Donations:
Ann Arbor Friends Meeting
Gary & Mary Lynn Gorski
Cathy Holt
Ed Matzke
Schwab Charitable
U of M Home Care Services Employees

Those Who Donated Through:
Accenture LLP
Ally Financial
Amazon Smile
AT&T Giving
Benevity
CAF America-Comcast
Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee
Frontstream
JCPenney-CyberGrants
Network for Good
Target c/o Cybergrants, LLC.
YourCause

United Way Donations:
Capital Area United Way
Heart of West Michigan United Way
KPMG Gives c/o Bergen County’s United Way
Livingston County United Way
United Way of Greater Atlanta
United Way of Greater Kansas City
United Way of Metro Dallas
United Way of Rhode Island
United Way of Southeastern Michigan
United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania
United Way Suncoast

Membership Renewals:
Cindy Dady
Matthew & Alyn Kay
Paula & Mark Sanders
Theodore & Maria Vlachos

New Members:
Eunjin Park
Robert Piper Family

The Autism Society of Michigan is grateful for the continued support and donations received from our members, general donations, United Ways and other business. Thank you!!