



Suzi Crowley

Does deep pressure help reduce anxiety?



Context

- Two of my pupils were struggling to settle during our morning Hello/Sensory session.
- I felt that this may be caused by anxiety about being in the classroom. I also wondered if this was to do with unmet sensory needs and whether deep pressure would help.

Plan

- Read and develop my understanding about deep pressure.
- Carry out a short baseline survey on the two pupil's ability to settle in Hello/Sensory time during two weeks in November 2018.
- As a class team apply some of the strategies for relieving anxiety through deep pressure focusing on these two pupils.
- Carry out the same survey again in June 2019.
- Evaluate if it has made a difference to their engagement in our Hello/Sensory time session.

Do

- Read: The National Autistic Society's Sensory and Motor Strategies book and other research on line.
- November 2018: Measure the two pupil's ability to settle in Hello/Sensory time
- June 2019: Re-measure the two pupil's ability to settle in Hello/Sensory time

Evaluation

- For both of the pupils there was some improvement in their ability to stay seated and engaged in the Hello/Sensory time.
- I feel that the deep pressure strategies made a difference; not just to the two pupil who were less anxious and more engaged in the session, but also that the Hello/Sensory session became a calmer session overall.

Next Steps and Future Plans

- Share findings with other teachers with the aim of supporting teachers to develop their understanding of deep pressure so that in turn they can support pupils who may be struggling with both sensory needs and anxiety.
- Work with OT/OT assistant to build up a bank of resources to support pupil's anxiety/sensory needs at Linwood.

Deep pressure strategies used:

- Gym ball chair
- Hand, foot or shoulder massage
- Trampoline and trampette (before session started)
- Weighted vest / jacket
- Weighted blanket
- Weighted snake

Pupil A

November 2018: Stayed sitting and participated in Hello/Sensory time 55% of the time.

June 2019: Stayed sitting and participated in Hello/Sensory time 75% of the time with 1:1 support from a TA using deep pressure strategies.

Pupil B

November 2018: Stayed sitting and participated in Hello/Sensory time 45% of the time.

June 2019: Stayed sitting participated in Hello/Sensory time 60% of the time with 1:1 support from a TA using deep pressure strategies.

References

NAS Sensory and Motor Strategies

Making Sense of Sensory Behaviour Falkirk Council

Sensory Issues in Autism East Sussex County Council