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IN-SYNC SUMMER ACTIVITIES

Article By Carol Stock Kranowitz, M.A.

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IN-SYNC SUMMER ACTIVITIES



BY CAROL STOCK KRANOWITZ, M.A.

FISH GOTTA SWIM, BIRDS GOTTA FLY, AND KIDS GOTTA MOVE!

Children's developing sensory systems need regular, vigorous physical activity. Outdoors is the best place, where there is much to look at, listen to, think about, respond to, and act upon.

Even when the outdoors is too hot, humid, or buggy to play comfortably, kids still gotta move. To get them up and moving, these simple activities will satisfy children of all abilities, whether in the backyard, along the sidewalks, indoors (when it rains), and in the community. Have fun!

IN THE BACKYARD AND ALONG THE SIDEWALKS

NATURE BRACELET

(from *The Out-of-Sync Child Has Fun*)



Stroll around the block and look for interesting, growing things to press onto a masking-tape bracelet. Bring extra tape, as children will want to make more than one.

What You Need: Wide masking tape

What to Do:

- Put a tape "bracelet" around your child's non-dominant wrist, sticky side out.
- Walk through the neighborhood, picking up small, natural items such as leaves, twigs, seeds, berries, and feathers. (Wild flowers and herbs are fine, but not if growing in somebody's garden!)
- Press items onto the sticky tape.
- Back home, remove the bracelet and stick its ends to the refrigerator or onto construction paper.

How This Develops Your Child's

Sense-Abilities:

- Scanning the environment for interesting items develops visual discrimination.
- Touching and pressing items onto the bracelet improves tactile discrimination.
- Discussing things that grow and change increases vocabulary and language skills.

ENVIRONMENTAL RHYTHM INSTRUMENTS



The natural world is a big music box. Rhythm instruments from earthly objects are pleasing to make, play, and hear.

What You Need: Bag for collecting items

What to Do:

- On a nature walk, look for natural items that make sounds when you do something with them.
- Make instruments out of natural items:
- Rhythm Sticks — foot-long twigs
- Shakers — seed pods (such as from locust trees), short leafy branches, tall grasses, corn husks, gourds, dried seaweed
- Tone blocks — smooth stones, walnuts, seashells
- Gutros (instruments that make a ratchet sound, traditionally made from hollow gourds and used in salsa music) — pine cones or dried corncobs, rubbed with a stick
- Pipes — hollow reeds
- At a barbecue or family reunion, pass around the environmental instruments. Tap, shake, rub, and blow into them for a novel sing-a-long.

How This Develops Your Child's Sense-abilities:

- Selecting natural noise-makers improves visual, tactile, and auditory discrimination.
- Acting upon concrete, three-dimensional items to produce a sound encourages children to use their bodies creatively to make things happen.

- Repurposing nature's treasures for a satisfying social activity reinforces the idea that everything on earth is connected.

MUSICAL NAILS



Illustration by Kathy Cassidy

Sources of music are everywhere, even in the toolkit and lying on the sidewalk.

What You Need:

- Variety of large nails or other metal objects, such as screws, bolts, spoons, blunt-tipped scissors, door hinges, and other odds and ends, displayed on a tray
- Yarn, cut into 12" pieces
- Branch, about 1 yard length, 1" diameter
- Stick, about 12"

What To Do:

- Go for a walk, picking up metal washers, screws, keys, and other metal items strewn along sidewalks and curbs. Or look for items in the kitchen or near the workbench. Put them on a tray.
- Sit on the porch or under a tree. Choose at least six metal items, and tie each to the middle of a piece of yarn. Knot the ends of the yarn to make a loop. (Kids will need help, but let them do what they can alone.)
- To dangle nails from the branch, the adult holds the branch horizontally while the children string their loops on it. It's easier when kids use both hands. (You will want to help them, but don't.) The first few nails need to be near the center of the branch. Adjust the spacing so nails are about 2" or 3" apart.

- Let kids take turns running the stick across the dangling nails. When nails hit one another, they make a pretty, tinkling sound.
- Use more yarn to suspend your Musical Nails from a tree for the wind to play.

How This Develops Your Child's Sense-abilities:

- Selecting metal items develops visual and tactile discrimination.
- Stringing nails onto the branch promotes eye-hand coordination and use of both hands together.
- Carefully playing Musical Nails helps the child modulate his actions and use "just-right" force to make loud or soft sounds without tangling everything.

BUS DRIVER

(from Growing an In-Sync Child)



Illustration by Dorell Godfrey

As Bus Driver, your child will take you for a slow or speedy, straight or curvy ride around the yard. As gleeful Passenger, he will soon learn to control the bus's direction and velocity from the back seat.

What You Need:

- Bicycle inner tube (free from the bike shop's trash), with metal valve removed
- Paper plate for steering wheel

What To Do:

- Two people step into the tube and bring it to waist level. "Bus Driver" presses the front of her body against the tube. "Passenger" stands behind Bus Driver and presses his back against the tube.

- Bus Driver holds her paper plate like a wheel and pretends to drive. Vroom, vroom!

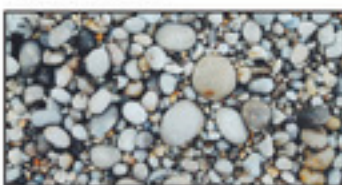
- When Passenger realizes he can pull on the stretchy tube to steer the bus, and when Bus Driver realizes that Passenger is really in charge as an assertive back-seat driver, it's time to switch.

How This Develops Your Child's Sense-Abilities

- Pushing and pulling the resistive rubber tube improves proprioception, the sense of one's muscles and joints.
- Careening around the grass improves a child's vestibular system, eye-body coordination and directionality

INDOORS ON A RAINY DAY

PEBBLE DROP



My grandson invented this game as a toddler. When I held up pebbles — helpfully, I thought — he overturned my hand so the pebbles fell. No help needed! The whole point of this game was to bend over, pick up, stand up, drop in....bend over, pick up, stand up, drop in. He knew what he was doing.

What You Need:

- Cardboard wrapping-paper tube
- Round pebbles, small shells, or large dried beans

What To Do:

- Hold the cardboard tube upright and touching the floor. Pile pebbles (shells, beans) at your feet.
- While holding the tube steady, bend over, pick up one pebble, and drop it into the tube.
- Repeat until you have dropped all the pebbles into the tube.

- Very slowly, raise the tube and watch the pebbles spill out onto the floor.

How This Develops Your Child's Sense-Abilities

- Bending and standing up strengthens the proprioceptive (a sense of motion and orientation through awareness of body positions) and vestibular (maintaining balance and controlling movement) systems.
- Picking up small items improves eye-hand coordination and fine-motor skills.

KP DUTY

(from *The In-Sync Activity Card Book*)



Everyone needs to learn to use tools. Everyone needs to help around the house. Everyone needs to be needed.

What You Need:

- Peelable vegetables, such as carrots, cucumbers, and potatoes
- Vegetable peeler

What To Do:

- Stand at the sink or over outspread newspaper.
- Hold a carrot in one hand and scrape away from yourself.

How This Develops Your Child's Sense-Abilities

- Messy cooking activities improve tactile processing.
- Scraping vegetables improves proprioception (awareness the sense of motion and orientations through awareness of body position.)

- Using hands to do different things enhances laterality, the ability to move either side of the body independently of the other.

CLEAN-UP BLITZ

(from *The Out-of-Sync Child Grows Up*)



Learning to clean up your own mess — and to help clean up other people's messes, too, when necessary — is part of growing up and becoming a responsible citizen.

What You Need:

- A messy house
- Kitchen timer

What To Do:

- Say, "Let's all work together to clean up whatever we can in ten minutes, and then let's play [favorite game]."
- Set the timer for 10 minutes.
- When the timer goes off, stop. Look around together, compliment everyone for a fine effort to put away toys and dishes, sit down, and play a family game.

How This Develops Your Child's Sense-Abilities

- Chores involve heavy work activity, providing proprioceptive input.
- Scanning the environment for things to clean up promotes visual discrimination.

PEOPLE SANDWICH

(from *The Goodenoughs Get In Sync*)



In their special ed classroom, the preschoolers are the Sandwich Makers, and two teachers are Sandwich Fillers.

Some children sense the need to bump and crash into people and objects because their nervous systems seek deep pressure to their skin, muscles and joints. This game is therapeutically wise and thoroughly fun.

What You Need:

A folding gym mat or a mattress and pillows/cushions

What To Do:

- “Sandwich Filling” lies face down on the left side of the mat (pretend slice of bread), with chin near the top edge.
- “Sandwich Maker” asks, “What kind of sandwich are you today?”
- Filling says, “turkey,” or “peanut butter,” or whatever he likes.
- Using her hands, Maker firmly rubs make-believe mayonnaise down Filling’s back and legs. Other condiments could be mustard, chopped onions, relish, catsup, butter, strawberry jam, etc., each applied firmly with a different hand or fist motion, such as chopping, squeezing, or pounding.
- Maker folds the right side of the mat (the top slice of bread) on top of Filling, leaving his head uncovered.
- Maker says, “Whoops! Too much mayonnaise! Got to squish some out!” She presses firmly on the mat from top to bottom, to squeeze out excess mayonnaise.
- Switch roles.

How This Develops Your Child’s Sense-Abilities:

- The deep pressure of the heavy mat feels good and usually calms a child with sensory issues.
- Thinking up more condiments — to keep the game going longer — improves the child’s auditory recall and language skills.

COMPASSIONATE COLLECTORS

(from *The Out-of-Sync Child Grows Up*)



This sensible and sensitive activity cements the concept that we all live together and need one another to survive.

Examples of What You Need:

- Food (canned or packaged, or grown and prepared at home)
- Furniture and housewares
- Sports equipment
- Musical instruments
- Books
- Clothes and blankets
- Toiletries and cosmetics

What To Do:

- As a family, discuss how to become Compassionate Collectors to benefit the community. Recipients of your collected items may be shelters for homeless people, schools, community or daycare centers.
- Ask relatives and neighbors to contribute. Speak to them directly or post a request on your neighborhood listserv.
- Sort, box, lift, and carry items to the center.

How This Develops Your Child’s Sense-Abilities:

- The physical work involved in growing, hunting, gathering, sorting, and handing over food and goods to people who can use them engages almost all the senses.
- The work also develops praxis — the ability to interact successfully with people and objects in one’s environment.



Illustration by @bkgjr

“Adopting” an elderly person in the neighborhood is a wise and wonderful activity that feels good all over.

What You Need:

Little old lady (or gentleman) in the neighborhood

Examples of What To Do:

- Carry groceries.
- Sweep sidewalk.
- Rake lawn.
- Bring cookies.
- Read a favorite story to her, or sing a song.

How This Develops Your Child’s Sense-Abilities:

- Heavy work activity, such as raking, engages the senses of touch, sight, sound, smell, body position, and movement.
- Interacting with others helps a child feel useful and needed.
- This activity promotes “learned willfulness,” the opposite of “learned helplessness” that children with challenges often feel. ■



Learn more about these activities and many more in three of Carol’s books, *The Out-of-Sync Child Has Fun*, *The Out-of-Sync Child Grows Up*,

and *The Goodenoughs Get In Sync*, and in two books she co-authored with Joyce Newman, *Growing an In-Sync Child* and *The In-Sync Activity Cards Book*. Carol is available for workshops on how Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) affects children and on fun and functional sensory-motor activities to get kids in sync. www.CarolStockKranow.com.