All children have a need for physical activity, but some children need to move more than others. You may notice that these children often engage in unsafe activities like climbing furniture, crashing into things, jumping off objects, running inside, and pushing their peers. This may be because their body is looking for extra proprioceptive input. The proprioceptive system is responsible for body awareness. It also plays a big role in self-regulation, attention, and focus.

Heavy work is commonly used to allow a child to get an adequate amount of proprioceptive input in a safe and appropriate way. The goal of heavy work activities is to help regulate a child’s arousal level, concentration, ability to sit still, and attend to a task. Heavy work activities should be offered throughout the day. These activities include pushing, pulling, lifting, squeezing, and pinching. It’s best to offer heavy work before a seated activity. Here are some ideas to try:

**Indoor Activities**
- Digging in the sand table or bin
- Jumping – jumping jacks, mini trampoline, trampoline park
- Stacking cups or containers
- Making a tunnel with chair and having child crawl under and over them
- Carrying heavy items (like groceries from the car or a laundry bag full of clothes)
- Pushing or pulling boxes of toys or books
- Cleaning – sweeping, vacuuming, mopping, wiping the table, scrubbing the floor
- Stacking and unstacking chairs
- Carrying around a suitcase or backpack with heavy items inside
- Erasing a whiteboard or chalkboard
- Pushing against a wall (tell them you need help making the room bigger)
- Taking out the trash
- Pounding on a drum
- Playing with play-doh, clay, putty
- Commando crawling (pull yourself along the floor with your arms only)
- Opening and holding doors
- Doing push-ups
- Push a toy stroller or shopping cart with heavy items inside
- Climbing stairs
- Pulling laundry out of the washer or dryer
- Mixing cookie/cake batter or bread dough, rolling out dough
Outdoor Activities
Raking leaves or shoveling snow
Gathering firewood
Digging in the sandbox or dirt, helping in the garden
Pulling another child in a wagon or pushing another child in a toy car
Carrying buckets or water, dirt, or sand
Bouncing a ball
Drawing with sidewalk chalk
Climbing playground equipment
Running, racing
Pushing a wheelbarrow
Pushing another child on a swing
Building a fort
Playing catch with a ball or bean bags
Crab crawling (walk with your hand and feet, stomach facing the ceiling)
Dancing and marching
Climbing a ladder
Riding a tricycle/bicycle or scooter
Swimming
Rolling down a hill
Squeezing a spray nozzle on a hose or a spray bottle
“Painting” the sidewalk or house with water (you just need a bucket or water and a big paint brush)

August 2019