



Sensational Toddler/Preschool OT Tip of the Month Hand Tools & Fidgets

Do you know children that...

1. Always have something in their hands or touching things?
2. Are constantly on the move, restless, or fidgety?
3. Are anxious in specific situations?

Young children learn and explore through hands on interaction with materials. Some children may need help finding a hand tool/ fidget to help regulate their sensory systems throughout the day. Hand tools can be used to help a young child settle or feel more in control.

Sensational Ideas about Hand Tools & Fidgets

1. Provide quiet fidgets/hand tools during transitions, circle time or quiet times. Beanbag animals, stress balls, bracelets, textured fabric squares, counting links are a few examples. Your classroom probably has these materials already as part of learning centers.
2. Teach how to use the object as a “tool” not a “toy”. Help them understand a tool can help them learn and listen.
3. Encourage the sensory seeking child to squeeze, stretch, or twist stretchy resistive hand tools/fidgets to organize and maintain an optimal level of arousal for learning.

For more information refer to the book:

Sensory Integration: A Guide for Preschool Teachers by Christy Isbell and Rebecca Isbell.

Google “fidgets” for a variety of hand tools and fidgets available commercially.

Go to www.cintiOTinstitute.com/privateschools and scroll to the bottom left corner for more tip sheets.

For information about occupational therapy services at COTI go to www.cintiOTinstitute.com.

(Dostal, 2015)