



Therapists as Collaborative Team members for Infant/Toddler Community Services

## Thinking Differently about Therapy Materials

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Have you ever been in a child's home providing therapy and wished silently you had that piece of equipment you always used at the clinic? You know, the nesting benches that were so versatile (but like nothing the parent had at home to follow through with) or that perfect little shape sorter or half-roll? But wait, look around, there probably are some great things in that child's home to integrate into therapy if we think outside the lines.

We'll give you some ideas to get started, then you can email us with your favorite ideas for a future newsletter. The differences in our various cultures and geographic settings should make this interesting.

Try:

- **The sofa without the cushions**, use it to pull to stand (lower surface), sit on (lower), jump off use the cushion to walk on uneven surface, different texture, jump on (ask Mom first!)
- **Diaper box or package (with diapers in it)**: as a bench seat, a chair for the coffee table, step-up, step down, jump off, etc.
- **The remote control**: great for finger isolation, motivation to roll, reach, crawl or walk to, etc.
- **Rolling chair**: some dining room chairs have wheels-use it as a "walker"
- **Window sills**: pull up and hold-look out and "talk", make kisses on the glass (after offering to wash them off, of course!)
- **Need another ball?** crumple a full sheet of newspaper, magazine page, advertising flyer into a "ball", or roll a sock into a ball, secure if needed with a rubber band, hair band, shoe lace. You can throw or kick it and if it's lost? No problem.
- **Want to do some threading?** use a shoe string or a straw to string objects onto-rings, pasta, milk carton caps, etc.
- **Want a shape sorter just the right size?** use plastic lids from Pringles can or powder drink container, cut shape of circle in one for lids off drink containers, use a second lid with square cut-out for blocks.
- **Borrow one of mom's spice jars** for screw/unscrewing lids, pouring, smelling, yummmmmmm!
- **Magnets and pictures on the refrigerator**: to point to, reach for, talk about, name,...





- **“Talk”:** about the various objects on the coffee table, book shelf, curio shelf, wall, in the fridge while in a practice position - it’s great to engage the child and supports transdisciplinary goals.
- **The kids all time favorite:** my name tag! No matter the kind or how it is worn, it works great as a visual aid, to reach, roll, sit, reach, turn, crawl, walk - it gets washed more than any toy and it’s always available!
- **Making a Bolster:** use a rolled towel, blanket, pillow.
- **Working on Balance:** walk on the garden border rails, jump off, step over them. Lining up catalogs, phone books, cushions or pillows from the couch add different surfaces to step on or over.
- **Balancing in Real Life Routines:** dressing skills in sitting or standing also works on balance... try: shorts, shoes, or a bathing suit!
- **Using Containers in Routines:** use an ice cream bucket or other pail to carry, put objects in, take objects out, turn upside down, hide objects under; this incorporates many fine and gross motor skills into family chores... use any objects appropriate to routine- barrette, comb, wash cloth for bathroom activities, lids, spoons, plastic containers for kitchen activities.
- **Strengthening Fine Motor Skills:** is it nice outdoors? Pull the blades of grass, take apart flowers or acorns, pick up pebbles and place them in a leaf to carry, pick and smell the flowers.
- **Supporting Standing:** pull out a dresser drawer at desired support height to pull to stand, cruise, reach, use for balance while dressing, take items out of the drawer, stoop to retrieve items from the floor.
- **Take a Plastic Grocery Bag:** one for you and one for the child, let the wind fill in and run with it; let go of the bag in the wind and chase it [to encourage faster walking or running].
- **Carry your Bag filled with your “Treasures”:** have a child reach high for some and pick up some from the ground. This incorporates words and following directions into your treasure hunt.
- **Need some Motivators?:** Get mom or dad to walk to, crawl to, turn to... Siblings of all ages are great helpers, idea people, and motivators.
- **The Pet:** use for mobility, language, reach, touch.
- **Sensory Materials:** look around for family preferred sensory materials: dried beans to scoop, feel, pick up and put away.
- **Squishy Toy:** fill a rubber glove and tie or rubber band the end.
- **Music:** “dance” to the music on the CD or the commercials on the TV rather than be annoyed.

Still stumped? - problem solve with Mom, Grandma, Dad, about what you are trying to do. Give a good description of what you might need - they often are very creative and good problem solvers, especially some whom you don’t give enough credit to! Often the child will teach you how to use an object “differently,” keep your eyes and thoughts open!

