

Strategies to Support Interoceptive Functioning

While there does not appear to be conclusive evidence pointing to one specific technique to support the development of healthy interoceptive processing in children, researchers have suggested that mindfulness activities like meditation and “reflection on interoceptive processes” may have an effect on regulation, the mind’s attentional and emotional response to interoceptive input, and that “skillful attention to interoceptive sensation may improve self-regulation”.

Based on what we already know about sensory processing, mindfulness techniques, and social emotional development, it’s possible that some tried and true strategies in these areas may also support interoceptive functioning in children.

Possible Strategies for Supporting Interoceptive Functioning

1. Common calming sensory techniques

- Repetitive, rhythmic vestibular input (swaying, swinging, rocking)
- Deep pressure input (wrapping up tight in a blanket, massage, bear hugs)
- Heavy work (squishing/squeezing play dough or a stress ball, pushing a laundry basket filled with items, jumping on the trampoline)

2. Common alerting sensory techniques

- Providing more intense, frequent sensory input to promote awareness
- Active movement breaks
- Frequent changes in position

3. Mindfulness activities

- Body scanning visualizations-bringing awareness and attention to the different parts of the body and referring to the sensations of breath, heartbeat, gurgling stomach, the weight of limbs, etc.
- Meditation
- Yoga

4. Language and communication strategies

- Providing kids with the language to describe what they are feeling
- Giving kids mechanisms and opportunities to communicate these internal sensations (using visual prompts, pictures, etc)

5. Social emotional teaching strategies

- Helping kids recognize, identify, and communicate feelings and emotions
- Expressing their own emotions clearly and modeling adaptive responses to our emotions
- Verbally labeling children’s emotions as we see them at home or in the classroom
- Playing games and reading books related to emotions and feelings

Adapted from: <http://theinspiredtreehouse.com/what-is-interoception/>