



Proprioceptive Input (Weight & Compression)

Using deep pressure to calm, orient, and stabilise the nervous system

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Important note

This resource is intended to support understanding and good practice in neuro-inclusive workplace design. It provides general guidance and does not constitute legal, medical, or clinical advice. Organisations should apply the principles in line with their own policies, regulatory obligations, and professional judgement.

Proprioception is your body's internal sense of **position, pressure, and movement**. When this system is under-stimulated, many neurodivergent people experience:

- emotional flooding
- agitation or restlessness
- dissociation or “floaty” feelings
- shutdown onset
- difficulty focusing or settling

Weighted and compressive input provides **clear, non-threatening sensory information** that helps the nervous system downshift.

This is not restraint.
It is **self-directed pressure**.

When proprioceptive input helps most

Use weight or compression when you notice:

- rising anxiety or irritability
- feeling uncontained or scattered
- difficulty staying present
- urge to pace, rock, or fidget constantly
- emotional intensity that won't settle

It's also helpful **preventatively** during transitions or before demanding tasks.

Core safety principles (important)

- Pressure should feel **comforting**, not restrictive
 - You control **intensity and duration**
 - Stop immediately if it feels distressing
 - Avoid compressing the neck, airway, or chest in a way that restricts breathing
 - This is **support**, not endurance
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Option 1. Weighted Items (most familiar)

Examples

- weighted blanket or lap pad
- heavy scarf or shawl
- weighted vest (brief use)

- backpack with evenly distributed weight

How to use

- Apply for **5–20 minutes**
- Sit or lie supported
- Keep breathing easy and unrestricted

Why it works

Weight provides steady downward pressure, signalling containment and safety.

Option 2. Self-Compression (no equipment)

Arms

- Cross arms tightly and squeeze
- Hold for **10–30 seconds**
- Release slowly

Hands

- Press palms together firmly
- Hold, then release

Legs

- Press feet firmly into the floor
- Contract thighs and calves gently

These are excellent **discreet, in-the-moment** options.

Option 3. Compression Through Clothing or Supports

Examples

- snug hoodie or cardigan
- compression clothing (if comfortable)
- tightly wrapped blanket around shoulders
- firm cushion held to torso

Why it works

Consistent pressure around joints and muscles increases body awareness and calm.

Option 4. Wall or Floor Pressure

Wall push

- Stand facing a wall
- Place palms flat and push steadily
- Hold for **10–20 seconds**, release

Floor press

- Lie on your back
- Press shoulders, hips, and heels gently into the floor
- Release slowly

This combines **pressure + muscle activation**... very grounding.

Option 5. Heavy Work (functional proprioception)

Examples

- carrying groceries
- moving books
- pushing a chair or table
- slow, controlled lifting (within safe limits)

Heavy work provides **dynamic proprioceptive input**, useful when you feel agitated or restless.

What to expect

You may notice:

- a sense of “dropping back into your body”
- slower breathing
- emotional intensity reducing
- improved focus or clarity
- urge to sigh or stretch

Some people feel calmer immediately; others feel a gradual settling.

What not to do

Avoid:

- using pressure to suppress emotion
- holding compression for long periods without breaks
- restricting breath or movement
- forcing yourself to tolerate discomfort
- using weighted items during full medical distress without guidance

Proprioceptive input **supports regulation**; it doesn't replace care.

Pairing with other tools

Weight and compression pair well with:

- hands-on-chest grounding
- sensory decompression breaks
- temperature grounding (after cooling)
- rhythm resets
- task entry rituals

A common sequence:

interrupt → **compress** → **re-orient**

For workplaces, schools, and public settings

Discreet options include:

- lap weights
- snug clothing layers
- wall pushes
- feet pressing into the floor
- firm cushions or armrests

These require **no explanation** and draw little attention.

If compression doesn't help

Some nervous systems prefer:

- movement-based proprioception (walking, stretching)

- lighter touch
- temperature grounding
- visual or auditory reduction

Regulation is **individual**. Choice matters.

A simple script to remember

“Steady pressure helps my body settle.”

A final reminder

Neurodivergent regulation is often **body-led**, not thought-led.

Proprioceptive input works because it:

- doesn't require words
- doesn't demand calm
- doesn't rush the process

When the body feels held and oriented, the mind usually follows.

Small.
Steady.
Effective.

