

Interoception

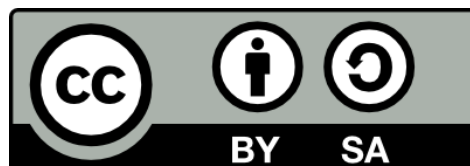
Parent and Caregiver Booklet



Government
of South Australia

Department for Education

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1. Foreword

Interoception is our 8th sense and it is the pre-requisite skill for self-regulation. Interoception is currently implemented in over 260 schools and preschools across South Australia and our team has created a number of resources to support the explicit teaching of interoceptive awareness in sites. In addition, we have created this booklet of Interoception activities that you can do with your children at home. In this booklet, you will find lots of activities you can complete with your child throughout your day and ways in which you can incorporate the language into activities you are already doing. By encouraging our children to connect to themselves during everyday activities, we help our children to identify their body signals, recognise when their body signals change, and act or respond in a socially acceptable way to these body signals.

The great thing about Interoception activities is that you can create your own with your child. Any activity that changes their body state can be used to encourage noticing how their body feels.

We hope you find this booklet useful to help your children deal with big emotions.



Introduction

Interoception is our 8th sense.

1. Sight	5. Smell
2. Taste	6. Proprioception
3. Sound	7. Vestibular
4. Touch	8. Interoception

Interoception is our conscious perception of our internal body signals which let us know how to respond to human needs or relate to our emotional experiences.

Interoception is the pre-requisite for self-regulation.

Body signals such as:

- Knowing when we are hungry
- Knowing when we are too hot or too cold
- Knowing when we are thirsty
- Knowing when we need to go to the toilet
- Knowing how to control our emotions

Benefits of teaching interoception:

- To help children connect to and learn to understand their own bodies and emotions
- It provides children with the tools to know when they are developing emotional reactions and the skills to be in control of those reactions.
- Classrooms where interoception is being taught have decreasing behavioural challenges and increases of positive wellbeing and prosocial behaviours



Introduction

What is an interoception activity?

An interoceptive activity focuses on creating and noticing a change in some aspect of one's internal self, such as **muscular system, breathing, temperature, pulse or touch**. Children with a muted or heightened state of interoception may not be able to identify their body signals and recognise mood changes or bodily self-regulation needs.

Interoception activities teach us to connect with our body, identify when there is a change and respond accordingly.

Structure of an interoception activity:

- Any activity that changes our body state whilst we notice how our body feels
- Complete an activity for at least 30 seconds
- Guiding question: where did you notice that activity (which body part)?
- Repeat the same activity for a second time, redirect the child to focus on a particular body part related to the activity.
- Guiding question: what did you notice about that particular body part?
- The child is encouraged to identify a change in their body state (eg – stretch-relax, hot-cold, soft-hard) and where they felt that change (arch or ball of foot, on top).



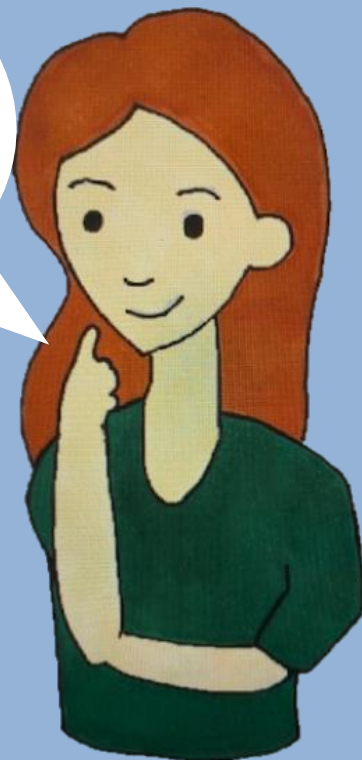


Q: When should I do Interoception activities?

A: As often as possible!
Interoception activities help to regulate your child, transition them from task to task and help them to engage in their learning.

A: Interoception activities help to regulate your child when they are experiencing heightened body signals. It helps them to develop a connection to self by recognising their body

Q: How do Interoception activities help my child?



Interoception activity

Bear Crawl

Start on the ground and get on all fours (both feet on the ground and both hands on the ground).

Lift your knees off the ground so you are on your toes.

Start moving the right hand forward, then the left leg, left hand then the right leg to go forward.

Which body part did you feel when we were completing that activity?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to bear crawl backwards. We are also going to focus on what we notice about our stomach muscles.

What did you notice about your stomach muscles?

Responses could be: Tight, sore, stretched, pulling muscle



Interoception activity

Kangaroo Jump

In a standing position, ensure your feet are placed together on the ground and you stand up straight.

Jump as far forward as you can, pushing both legs off the ground.

Where did you feel it in your body when we jumped forward?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on our leg muscles and see if this time we can jump even further.

How did your leg muscles feel when we jumped forward?



Interoception activity

Crab Walk

In a seated position, ensure your feet are placed flat on the ground.

Reach behind and put both of your hands on the ground.

Lift your bottom off the ground and move your hands and feet to walk backwards.

Where did you feel it in your body when we were doing the crab walk?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on what we notice about our stomach muscles.

How did your stomach muscles feel when we were crab walking?



Interoception activity

Frog Jump

Crouch down with your knees bent.

Place your hands on the ground near your feet.

Push off the ground and jump out in front of you.

Repeat 5 times.

Where did you feel it in your body when we jumped like a frog?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on our leg muscles.

How did your leg muscles feel when we jumped like a frog?



Interoception activity

The Toe Toucher

In a seated position, ensure your feet are placed on the ground and you sit up straight.

Stretch your legs out straight.

Reach your arms out straight and extend your arms to your toes.

Where did you feel it in your body when we were stretching?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on our hamstrings.

How did your hamstrings feel while completing that stretch?



Interoception activity

Reverse Toe Toucher

Start off in a kneeling position.

Reach both of your hands behind you and curve your back.

Try and touch your ankles or toes with your hands.

Where did you feel it in your body when we did this stretch?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on our back muscles

How did your inner thigh muscles feel while holding that stretch?



Interoception activity

Side Plank

Lie on your right side with your legs extended.

Make sure your right elbow is balanced on the ground.

Lift your hips and knees off the ground, with your elbow balanced on the ground supporting your body.

Hold the side plank for 60 minutes.

Where did you feel it in your body when we were holding this stretch?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to switch sides to have your left elbow on the ground. This time we are going to focus on what we notice about our stomach muscles

How did your stomach muscles feel while holding that stretch?



Interoception activity

Circles in the sky

Lay on your back with your hands by your side.

Lift one leg up in the air.

With your foot, twist your foot to make little circle shapes in the air.

Where did you feel it in your body?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on our ankle and use the opposite leg.

How did your ankle feel while making the circles?

What other shapes can we make? Can we point our toes and draw a rectangle with our foot to the sky?



Interoception activity

Arm Circles

Stand tall and pull your shoulders back.

Put your arms out straight, hold them up at shoulder height.

Start to make mini circles in the air with your arms.

Where did you feel it in your body?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on our arm muscles.

How did your arm muscles feel while completing the activity?



Interoception activity

Flutter Kick

Start by laying on your back.

Put your hands by your side.

While laying on your back, make small kicks with each leg (pretend you are swimming)

Aim for 20 flutter kicks

Where did you feel it in your body?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on our stomach muscles.

How did your stomach muscles feel while doing the flutter kicks?



Interoception activity

Rocking Boat

Start by laying on the ground.

Put your arms out straight behind your head (your ears should be touching your arms)

Put your legs out straight and lift them up so they are slightly off the ground.

Begin rocking back and forth.

Where did you feel it in your body?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on our stomach muscles.

How did your stomach muscles feel while doing this activity?



Interoception activity

The Superman

Start on all fours with knees and hands on the ground.

Lift your left arm off the ground and stretch it out in front of you, while also lifting your right leg off the ground keeping it straight. Hold this position for 10 seconds and then place both your leg and arm back down onto the ground.

Now repeat this exercise but using your right arm and left leg.

Where did you feel it in your body?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on our stomach muscles.

Where did you notice about your stomach muscles?



Interoception activity

Snake Breathing

Sit comfortable in a chair or on the ground.

Take a big deep breath in through your nose and hold it in for 5 seconds.

When you breathe out through your mouth, make a hissing sound as long as you can.

Repeat 3 times.

Where can you feel it in your body?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on taking a big breath in through our nose and big hissing noise on the way out.

How does your body feel now?



Interoception activity

Wood Chopper Breathing

Stand up tall with your legs hip-width-apart.

Clasp both of your hand together and raise your arms above your head while take a deep breathe in through your nose.

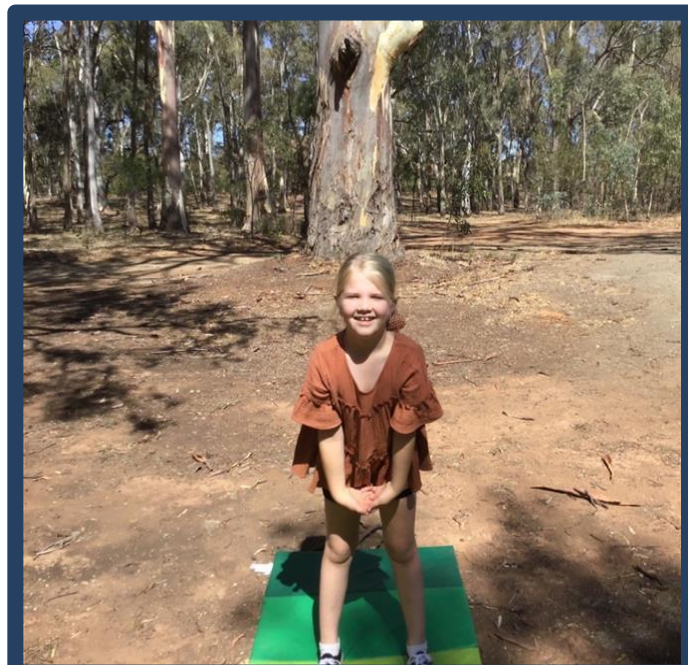
Swing your arms back towards your legs and breathe out through your mouth as you say “HA” to “chop” the wood.

Repeat this 3 times.

Where did you feel it in your body?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on taking a big deep breath in, holding the breath in for 3 seconds then a big breath out through our mouth. Repeat this 3 times.

How does your body feel now?



Interoception activity

Elephant Breathing

Start by standing up tall with your legs in a wide stance.

Take a big deep breath in through your nose and lift your arm up as if they were an elephant's trunk.

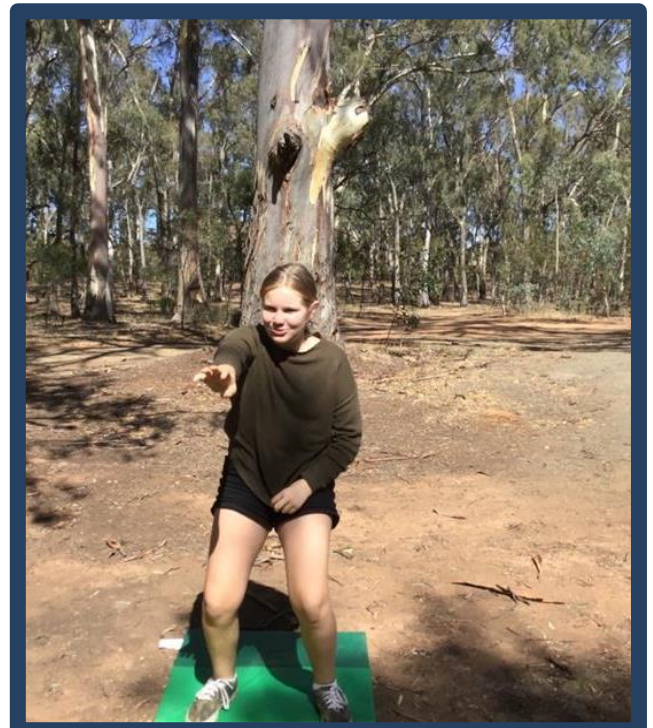
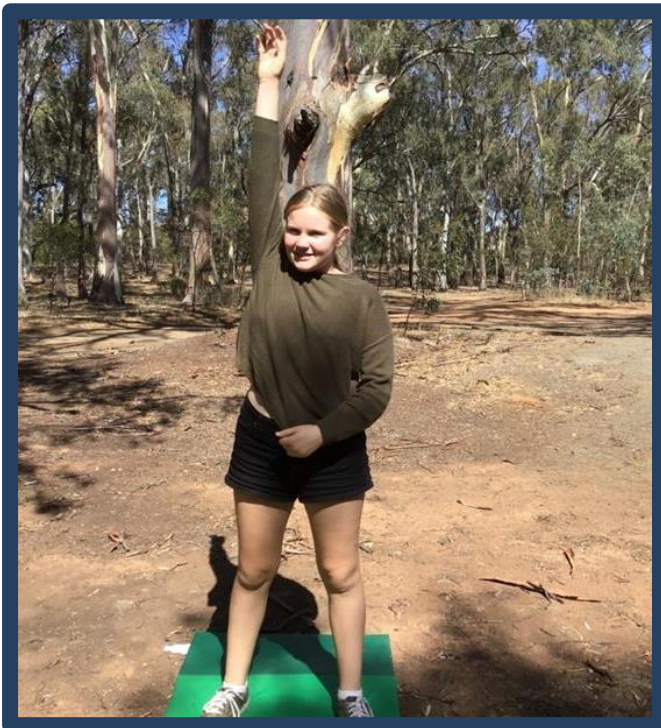
When you breath out loudly through your mouth and bring your arms downs as they bend down a little, bringing the "elephant truck" down.

Repeat 3 times.

Where did you feel it in your body?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on taking a big deep breath in, holding the breath in for 3 seconds then a big breath out through our mouth. Repeat this 3 times.

How does your body feel now?



Interoception activity

Infinity breathing

Start by sitting in a chair.

With your index finger, start to trace an infinity symbol on your table.

Start in the middle, go up to the left and trace the left part of the infinity symbol while breathing in through your nose.

When you get back to the middle of the 8 again, breathe out through your mouth while you trace the right part of your infinity symbol.

Where did you feel it in your body?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on our breathing in through our nose and out through our mouth.

What change did you notice in your body after focusing on your breathing?

BREATHE IN



BREATHE OUT



Interoception

Incidental learning

Interoception activity

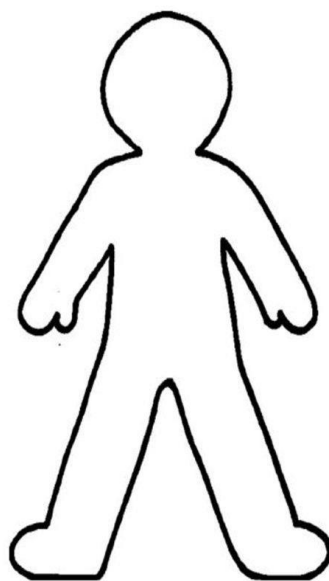
Body tracing

These activities can be done throughout the day within various tasks and connected to areas of the curriculum. These incidental learning activities can teach your child to identify their internal body signals and further develop their connection to self.

Trace around your child on the ground with chalk (you could also connect this to the Maths curriculum by asking your child to measure their body using household items, books, pegs or shoes).

Ask your child to circle with chalk on their traced body:

- What body signals do they get when they are hungry?
- What body signals do they get when they are thirsty?
- What body signals do they get when they are too hot?
- What body signals do they get when they are too cold?
- What body signals do they get when they are nervous?
- What body signals do they get when they are angry?
- What body signals do they get when they are happy?



Interoception activity

Hopscotch

These activities can be done throughout the day within various tasks and connected to areas of the curriculum. These incidental learning activities can teach your child to identify their internal body signals and further develop their connection to self.

Create a backyard hopscotch with chalk (also can incorporate the maths curriculum). Ask your child to hop or jump from square to square 3 times.

Ask your child: where did you feel it in your body?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on our leg muscles.

What did you notice about your leg muscles?

(pressure, stretching, pulling, tight)



Interoception activity

Baking

These activities can be done throughout the day within various tasks and connected to areas of the curriculum. These incidental learning activities can teach your child to identify their internal body signals and further develop their connection to self.

Using a bowl of ingredients and your child is stirring the bowl, ask them to use their muscles and stir hard 5 times.

Ask your child: Where did you feel it in your body?

We are going to stir the bowl again, but this time we are going to focus on what we notice about our arm muscles.

What did you notice about your arm muscles?

(sore, tight, stretching, pressure)



Interoception activity

Backyard races

These activities can be done throughout the day within various tasks and connected to areas of the curriculum. These incidental learning activities can teach your child to identify their internal body signals and further develop their connection to self.

Set up a backyard race for your child (they could even race against you!)

Before the race begins, ask your child to locate their pulse either on their neck, wrist or even chest.

Ask them to count how many beats they feel in one minute (remember this number)

Start the backyard race – you might need to run up and back twice.

Straight after, ask your child to locate their pulse again and count how many beats they feel this time.

What did we notice about our pulse?

Was it faster the second time? Why?



Interoception activity

Incidental Learning | Smell the roses climbers

Smell the roses

These activities can be done throughout the day within various tasks and connected to areas of the curriculum. These incidental learning activities can teach your child to identify their internal body signals and further develop their connection to self.

Go on a nature walk or even explore your backyard with your child. Ask them to pick their favourite flower.

Start a breathing activity with them, by asking them to take a deep breath in through their nose while smelling the flower and then a big breath out through their mouth trying to blow off the flower petals.

Repeat this 3 times.

Where did you feel it in your body?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on a big deep breath in through our nose and a big deep breath out through our mouth.

What change did you notice in your body after focusing on your breathing?

(calm, relaxed, sleepy, floppy)



Interoception activity

DIY stress balls

These activities can be done throughout the day within various tasks and connected to areas of the curriculum. These activities through incidental learning can teach your child to identify their internal body signals and further develop their connection to self.

Make a DIY stress ball with your child – using a balloon and rice or flour to fill the balloon. Once you have made the stress ball, ask your child to squeeze the stress ball as hard as they can for 20 seconds.

Ask your child: which part of your hand did you feel the squeeze in?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on our knuckles.

What did you notice about your knuckles?



Interoception activity

DIY glitter bottle

These activities can be done throughout the day within various tasks and connected to areas of the curriculum. These activities through incidental learning can teach your child to identify their internal body signals and further develop their connection to self.

Make a DIY glitter bottle – using a bottle, filling it with water and glitter.

Once you have made the glitter bottle, ask your child to shake the glitter bottle as hard as they can for 20 seconds (make sure the lid of the bottle is screwed on tight).

Ask your child: which part of your hand did you feel the shake in?

We are going to repeat the activity again, but this time we are going to focus on what we notice about our fingers.

What did you notice about our fingers?



<https://especiallyeducation.com/diy-sensory-bottles/>



Interoception activity

Bedtime story

Choose a bedtime story to read to your child (see examples below). Throughout or after reading the story, have a conversation about interoception and self-regulation with your child. You could use the following questions as a guide:

- What were the body signals the character was showing?
- What body signals do you get when you are sad, angry or nervous?
- When you are starting to feel those body signals, what could help you to feel better? Who could help you with this?

<i>Title of Book</i>	<i>Author</i>
The Bad-Tempered Ladybug	Eric Carle
Tiger has a Tantrum	Sue Graves
The Huge Bag of Worries	Virginia Ironside
The Very Cranky Bear	Nick Bland
The Disappointment Dragon	KI Al-Ghani
The Underwater Fancy-Dress Parade	Davina Bell
Hippo is Happy	Jane Bingham
My Mouth is a Volcano!	Julia Cook
What do you do with a problem?	Kobi Yamada
The Panicosaurus	KI Al-Ghani
Everybody feels scared	Jane Bingham
Giraffe's can't dance	Giles Anderson & Guy Parker-Rees
Glad Monster, Sad Monster	Ed Emberley & Anne Miranda
Mouse was mad	Linda Urban
My Body	Andrea Pinnington
Wemberley Worry	Kevin Henkes
Fantastic Elastic Brain	JoAnn Deak
When I'm Feeling Scared	Trace Moroney



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