



## THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITIES GUIDE: BAKING

### AIM

- To think about the different ways that we can use baking as a therapeutic activity at home!

### OVERVIEW

- We want to be able to provide opportunities throughout the day to explore, experiment, and regulate. Baking is a great way to do this with our children.

### WHO THIS IS FOR

- Children who are old enough to bake! Remove anything that might be unsafe or unpleasant to put in your mouth when raw, such as eggs if needed for the child.



We're big fans of using baking as a therapeutic activity within daily life. Baking is often associated with nurture and social opportunities (friends, family, and cake!). It is a sensory rich experience- the feel of different textures, the smell of different ingredients, the resistance you get from kneading a dough, or stirring a mixture. There are different ways we can adapt baking depending on how we want to help a child.



For a child who is **over-excited** (giddy, hyper, angry, agitated), baking activities which include lots of resistance are most helpful, for example kneading bread 🍞.

This gives opportunity to use two sensory systems -

- the **tactile system**, mainly through deep pressure to the palm of the hands 🖐️ (this is like a 'squeeze' sensation which is calming), and the
- **proprioceptive system**, mainly through pushing down into it and squeezing it with your fingers 🖍️ (this is also calming)

For a child who is more **withdrawn or passive** (avoiding eye contact, withdrawn from participating in activities), baking with ingredients which require force are really helpful - like breaking eggs! Baking where you can touch ingredients is usually alerting, but be cautious if your child has tactile sensitivity and doesn't want to do this, as it could put them off participating

Please always consult with your Occupational Therapist if your child has any known or suspected Sensory Integration difficulties.



🍪 For children who find visual perception difficult (for example experiencing difficulties drawing shapes, handwriting), make biscuits of different shapes - any at all- for a fun way to experiment and explore. Make long biscuits, round biscuits, big biscuits and small biscuits. You can learn about different qualities of size and shape using your vision and touch!



🍪 For children that we want to help to be more spontaneous and active, give them the icing sugar, sprinkles, or anything else decorative, and let them help with decorating. They will have to do very little movement for a big response, so children who tend to hold back or be a little bit more inhibited will get a lot of feedback!

📖 For children who find sequencing difficult, recipes are a useful (and often motivating!) way to practice this- the order things need to go into, the place they need to go. You could use writing, key words, photographs or other visual supports. You can also look to your Speech and Language Therapy colleagues for help with visual scaffolds if needed!

↔ Practice feeling how the two sides of your body feel different when you're stirring a mixture- experiment taking it in turns with swapping arms to stir a mixture. This will help with body awareness- one side of the body would usually be easier than the other!

👂 If your child can be sensitive to sound, you could consider eliminating any loud equipment such as electric whisks or mixtures. If you think your child can manage these, then activities which use proprioceptive may help to down-regulate the impact of the sound. For example, putting a blender on and then completing activities such as-

- Squeezing hands together
- Doing a wall push up
- Bear walking round the kitchen on your hands and feet whilst it is on, so you get lots of feedback through your muscles from the movement and weight bearing

🗨️ Take the time to talk- often conversation and social opportunities flow as a natural part of doing something enjoyable together. Conversations which at other times might feel challenging, will often flow more naturally when people are both engaged and enjoying sharing an experience together.

👨🍳 Baking can be a useful activity to just focus on shared joy and pleasure. If you chose a simple recipe (good old rice crispy buns!) you can just focus on the connection without any stress. You can just focus on enjoying your time together.



🕒 Waiting for items to bake can be a useful time to help to develop children's sense of time. For example, you could complete certain activities in the 20 minutes your buns are baking- maybe you could think of quite concrete things to do whilst you wait- setting up an obstacle course and going round it 5 times, for example. Or you could take this opportunity to practice using a visual timer. Children will learn about time better when they are calm and relaxed- more than when they're hungry and tired!

👨👩👧 For children who struggle with turn-taking, or sharing the attention of the key adult, baking as a group of a family unit helps to create a 'space' where everyone is working together completing different required steps.

🕒 Take the time to sit down and enjoy your baked goods together. You could keep them in a special tin and when you need some quality time head over for a snack and a drink together.

Please liaise with your Occupational Therapist before proceeding if any of the recommended activities are beyond what your child may usually do in their daily lives. Juniper Tree Therapy Ltd cannot be held responsible for any injury which comes from misuse from the guidance within this document. These activities should be supervised by a responsible adult at all times. Risk assessment for equipment and environments should always be completed prior to using these activities.