

# HEART

HEART: Healing and Education through the Arts

## **ADJUSTMENTS OF HEART ACTIVITIES**

You have to think about adjusting HEART activities so that all children benefit from these activities. Knowing the child with whom you are doing HEART activities is very important as is your knowledge to accommodate these activities. Give children plenty of time.

## **SUGGESTIONS IN ACCOMMODATING HEART ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN, ACCORDING TO THEIR NEEDS**

In the following section we offer you some guidance on adjusting activities based on different types of difficulties that some children face.

1. Physical or motor challenges
2. Difficulty seeing
3. Difficulty hearing
4. Difficulty learning or understanding
5. Difficulty staying focused and well-behaved
6. Hypersensitive or hyposensitive
7. Difficulty communicating



### **PLEASE NOTE:**

Some children may have multiple disabilities, and will therefore benefit from accommodations listed under more than one of the categories below.

## I. SUGGESTIONS FOR ADJUSTING HEART ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE PHYSICAL OR MOTOR CHALLENGES

There are many different types of physical challenges that could impact a child's ability to complete HEART activities. Some children may have difficulty with gross motor skills (such as moving their arms, legs, or body), while others may have difficulty with fine motor skills (such as moving their hands and fingers with precision). Consider the individual difficulties a child has with physical movement, and try to focus on what he/she can do, rather than what he/she cannot do.

- Difficulty walking;
- Difficulty moving between groups of children, tables, etc.
- Difficulty standing for long periods of time;
- Difficulty gripping small items, such as pencil, pen, or scissors;

### WHEN ADJUSTING HEART ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WITH MOTOR DIFFICULTIES YOU CAN CONSIDER USING THE FOLLOWING ADVICE:

- ✓ Be flexible in where and how the child chooses to sit and work – ensure he/she is comfortable before beginning a HEART activity.
- ✓ During body movement activities, offer children several different ways of participating.
- ✓ Make sure all children are easily able to access the materials by placing them within their easy to reach distance.
- ✓ If any activities require cutting materials, ensure that there is pre-cut material also available.
- ✓ If a child has difficulty keeping his/her paper steady, tape it to the table or easel so it doesn't move easily.
- ✓ Support the child to use an alternate body part to create art (i.e. gripping a marker with an elbow or with toes).
- ✓ Allow the child to take breaks as needed.
- ✓ Encourage all children to ask for help if they need it.

**NOTE:**

Only select the recommendations that fit with the needs of your children. Not all recommendations will be relevant in all situations.

## 2. SUGGESTIONS FOR ADJUSTING HEART ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY SEEING

Vision-related challenges some children may face:

- Blindness;
- Low vision;
- Difficulty differentiating different colors;
- Difficulty seeing well at a distance;
- Difficulty distinguishing objects up close.

WHEN PROVIDING ACCOMMODATIONS OF HEART ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WITH VISION IMPAIRMENTS YOU CAN CONSIDER USING SOME OF THE FOLLOWING ADVICE:

- ✓ Ensure that the child has access to more tactile materials, such as clay, sandpaper, ribbon, tissue paper, etc.
- ✓ Ensure that the classroom is clearly lit, and that the child is able to sit where the lighting is strong.
- ✓ Ensure that the art materials are easy to reach for the child, and guide him/her through each material that is available so that he/she can recognize it by touch and where it is placed.
- ✓ Help guide the child's hand toward the paper/workstation when beginning an assignment.
- ✓ If ever writing directions, ensure that they are written largely and clearly, and that the words are also read out loud.

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### 3. SUGGESTIONS FOR ADJUSTING HEART ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY HEARING

Hearing-related challenges some children may face:

- Deafness;
- Hard of hearing in one ear (left or right);
- Hard of hearing in both ears;
- Inability to speak clearly or at all.

WHEN PROVIDING ACCOMMODATIONS OF HEART ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN THAT HAVE DIFFICULTIES HEARING YOU CAN CONSIDER USING SOME OF THE FOLLOWING ADVICE:

- ✓ Speak loudly and clearly, while facing the children
- ✓ Ensure that the child can see your face while you are speaking (for easy lip reading)
- ✓ Eliminate unnecessary background noise.
- ✓ Use signs or gestures when speaking to more clearly convey your point
- ✓ Use facial expressions to help clarify the sentiment you are trying to convey
- ✓ Demonstrate each activity while you describe it so that children are aware of the steps they are meant to take
- ✓ Encourage other children to speak clearly and use gestures or key words when presenting their work, so that all children can participate in the discussion.
- ✓ Regularly check in with the student to verify that he/she understands what has been said.
- ✓ Repeat back what the child has said to ensure that everyone has understood clearly.

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#### 4. SUGGESTIONS FOR ADJUSTING HEART ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY LEARNING OR UNDERSTANDING

Some of the challenges children having difficulties understanding might face are:

- Difficulty understanding directions;
- Takes more time to process information;
- Easily forgets information.

WHEN PROVIDING ACCOMMODATIONS OF HEART ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN THAT HAVE DIFFICULTY IN LEARNING OR UNDERSTANDING YOU CAN CONSIDER USING SOME OF THE FOLLOWING ADVICE:

- ✓ Speak slowly and clearly when giving directions
- ✓ Present information visually and verbally
- ✓ Break directions into small steps
- ✓ Allow the child extra time to complete activities
- ✓ Ask a child to summarize the instructions after you give them
- ✓ Listen carefully
- ✓ Ensure that you are speaking you use visual clues like pictures or gestures;
- ✓ Talk about what you or the child is doing while you are doing it
- ✓ Encourage the child to speak and to share with you what he is doing; ask concrete questions
- ✓ Encourage hands-on experiences: touching, holding and exploring.
- ✓ Ask first if the child needs help; don't assume that it is needed or wanted.
- ✓ Encourage the child to let you know by a special signal if he/she does not understand something you are explaining
- ✓ If the child does not understand what you are saying, try rephrasing rather than repeating it.

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## 5. SUGGESTIONS FOR ADJUSTING HEART ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE CHALLENGES STAYING FOCUSED AND BEHAVED THROUGH THE ACTIVITY

Some of the challenges children having difficulties with attention might face are:

- Easily distracted;
- Difficulty staying on task;
- Difficulty focusing;
- Disruptive to other children.

WHEN PROVIDING ACCOMMODATIONS OF HEART ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN HAVE CHALLENGES STAYING FOCUSED AND BEHAVED THROUGH THE ACTIVITY YOU CAN CONSIDER USING SOME OF THE FOLLOWING ADVICE:

- ✓ Seat the child away from distractions
- ✓ Always say the child's name when speaking to him/her
- ✓ Plan activities that build on the child's interests
- ✓ Break complex activities into smaller and shorter parts
- ✓ Plan shorter activities that do not require long periods of concentration
- ✓ If the child struggles with being able to sit still, incorporate movement into the activity
- ✓ Reinforce and reward positive behavior
- ✓ Stand or sit close to the child so you can help if needed
- ✓ Allow the child to take breaks when needed
- ✓ Use energizers when energy/focus seems low
- ✓ Provide the child with a checklist or schedule with each step of the activity
- ✓ Be sure to have the child's attention before giving instructions
- ✓ Identify what the child is trying to gain or avoid with poor behavior, and encourage an acceptable replacement behavior that achieves the result for the child
- ✓ Establish and enforce class behavior rules
- ✓ Provide the child with a checklist or schedule with each step of the activity

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- ✓ Provide opportunities for the child to talk
- ✓ Give the child reasonable choice
- ✓ Ignore negative behavior if you can (this does not mean that you ignore the child completely but instead that you do not react to the displayed unacceptable behavior)



## 6. SUGGESTIONS FOR ADJUSTING HEART ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE HYPER OR HYPO STIMULATED

Some of the challenges children having difficulties with over or under-stimulation might face are:

- Extremely frustrated when a classroom is too loud or busy;
- Extremely frustrated when touched;
- Extremely frustrated when the schedule changes unexpectedly.

WHEN PROVIDING ACCOMMODATIONS OF HEART ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE HYPER OR HYPO STIMULATED YOU CAN CONSIDER USING SOME OF THE FOLLOWING ADVICE:

- ✓ Avoid changing activities abruptly; allow time for adjustment.
- ✓ Explain the schedule for the day at the start of class, and clearly indicate if or when something will change.
- ✓ Provide the child with fewer options of materials (in terms of colour and type)
- ✓ Be a good listener and pay attention to how the child is reacting during sessions
- ✓ Continuously describe what you or the child is doing during the activity
- ✓ Increase or decrease the room light to avoid glare
- ✓ Avoid standing with your back toward windows causing a silhouette
- ✓ Establish routines and provide structure that the child can follow
- ✓ Use items such as timers, lights or bells to signal the start or end of an activity
- ✓ Do not change activities abruptly and warn the child of changes ahead of time
- ✓ Let the child bring a familiar object when entering new situations for added sense of security
- ✓ Allow the child to work in a quiet corner, or to leave the room if it becomes too noisy.
- ✓ Allow the child to have a safe emotional outlet for anger or fear.
- ✓ Respect the child's feelings and follow his/her lead – let the child engage with materials and activities at a level that makes them comfortable.
- ✓ Teach the child of appropriate behavior

**NOTE:**

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## 7. SUGGESTIONS FOR ADJUSTING HEART ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY COMMUNICATING

Some of the challenges children having difficulties communicating might face are:

- Stuttering;
- Speaking with a lisp, or difficulty forming words;
- Inability to physically speak;
- Difficulty remembering words.

There are many different ways in which children can struggle to communicate. Some children may experience difficulty with their physical voice, and are unable to speak loudly or at all. Other children may be able to speak but have difficulty pronouncing certain letters or sounds correctly. Still other children may be able to pronounce words correctly, but struggle with fluency and language, stuttering, pausing, or struggling to find the right word to express their opinions.

**WHEN PROVIDING ACCOMMODATIONS OF HEART ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY COMMUNICATING YOU CAN CONSIDER USING SOME OF THE FOLLOWING ADVICE:**

- ✓ Keep the child in a position close to you
- ✓ Learn about the child's communication preferences (gestures, picture cards, etc.) and incorporate them into your conversations.
- ✓ If the child uses a picture board to communicate, ensure that there are pictures appropriate for discussing art and art materials
- ✓ Do not rush the child or pressure him/her to speak
- ✓ Do not interrupt the child to say what you assume he/she is trying to say
- ✓ Do not allow other children to tease the child
- ✓ Allow the child to give answers in writing
- ✓ Provide opportunities for the child to give short answers yes/no answers
- ✓ Apply activities that require less or no demanding verbal activity from the child

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- ✓ Apply activities by means of songs, music, sound and body imitations
- ✓ Apply activities that require more visual engagement