

Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies

Use these physical activity and emotional regulation prompt cards to lead experiences in your early years service



We all want children to develop their motor skills and confidence while finding ways to move their body in a way that they enjoy. Movement also helps children regulate their emotions and can help create a calmer learning environment.

Use these cards to inspire intentional movement and emotional regulation experiences within your service.

How does it work?

Activity cards

See the activity cards below to get you started with new activities that you could try within your service. There are activities for children and staff included. You can use the activities from these suggestions or trial your own new activity.

Resources for families

You can also share the activity cards with families to encourage them to try a new activity, get out for a walk or integrate more movement into their day.

Resources for staff

See the activity ideas for staff that could spark some inspiration for something you can encourage staff to participate in.

Early years

A summary of physical activity guidelines for early years



Infants aged 1 and below

Physical activity: Active several times throughout the day including interactive floor-based play and tummy time. Aim for at least 30 minutes of tummy time spread throughout the day.

Sleep: Aim for 14 to 17 hours of sleep for 0–3 months old, and 12 to 16 hours for 4–11 months old. This includes naps.

Toddlers aged 1 to 2

Physical activity: Physical activity should consist of at least 180 minutes spread throughout the day. Energetic play is included in this.

Sleep: Aim for 11 to 14 hours of sleep, including naps. Sleep and wake-up times should be consistent day-to-day.

Pre-schoolers aged 3 to 5

Physical activity: Physical activity should consist of at least 180 minutes spread throughout the day. 60 minutes of this should be energetic play.

Sleep: Aim for 10 to 13 hours of sleep, this could include a nap. Sleep and wake-up times should be consistent day-to-day.

A note on sedentary behaviour and screen time: Children should not be restrained or sitting for more than an hour at a time (such as in a car seat or stroller). Limit screen time as much as possible.

Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies

Activity card: Yoga



Purpose

Yoga is a gentle movement activity that can have benefits for emotional regulation. The focus is on fun and trying new shapes to move our bodies in.

Recommended age

Yoga can be adapted to suit various ages and stages. The poses displayed here are recommended for children from 3 years old and up.

Equipment required

- Space for children to move
- Optional soft mats

Instructions for activity

Yoga can be an intentional activity or you can spread the poses throughout the day. Be creative in what works for the children at your service.

Warm-up (5 minutes)

- If using this as an intentional activity, it can be ideal to begin by getting some energy out.
- Start with simple star jumps, running on the spot or shaking out the body.
- You can then encourage children to sit cross-legged on the floor. Ask them how their body feels. Can they feel the floor beneath them? What can they hear around them? Spend a few minutes here.

Yoga (10 to 15 minutes)

- Explain to the children that you are going to try some fun yoga poses today. These may be different shapes from how they have moved their bodies before.
- You can run through each yoga pose giving examples as you go and encouraging children to try the poses. Find something that makes it interesting for them to connect the poses to, whether this is how the poses compare with an animal or an object.
- If you teach children the names of the poses, you can play a 'yogi says' game and run through each pose, getting children to remember which one to do. Start with just a few poses and build on them as the children become familiar with them.

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Activity card: Yoga

Example poses

Warrior

With a wide stance, lean into the front leg with a lunge. Turn the back foot on an angle and stretch the arms out wide. Feel strong like a warrior.



Stretched tree pose

Stretch up tall from standing and reach the arms towards the roof and slightly backwards. Imagine you are as tall as a tree.



Cobra pose

Lay on the ground on your tummy. Place hands on the ground underneath your shoulders and stretch the back backwards gently curling up from the ground like a cobra.



Butterfly

Sit on the floor up tall. Bring feet together forming a triangle or butterfly wings with your legs.



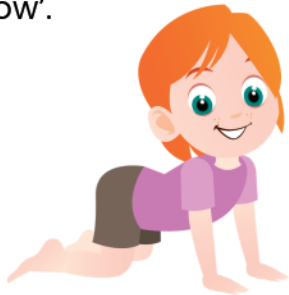
Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies

Activity card: Yoga

Example poses

Cat and cow

Kneel on the ground on all fours with the arms underneath the shoulders and knees underneath hips. Curl the back and lift your head up into a 'cat' then curl your head down and flex the back into a 'cow'.



Boat

Sit on the ground and bring your legs up straight in front of you. Bring your arms out straight to reach towards them and balance.



Tree

Stretch up tall to the ceiling and bring your hands together in front of you. Carefully bring one foot up to rest on the inside of the standing leg. Test your balance and be strong like a tree.



Downward dog

Begin on all fours on the ground. Slowly push up onto your hands and stretch out your legs. Lean backwards and push your head towards your legs, stretching like a dog.



Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies

Activity card: Animal movement



Purpose

This is a fun, creative way to get children running, stomping and hopping. It helps foster imagination, develop motor skills, balance and social interaction.

Recommended age

This is a flexible activity and can be appropriate for children from 2 years of age and up.

Equipment required

- Space for children to move in
- Best completed outside
- Animal cards/images (optional)

Instructions for activity

Introduction (5 minutes)

- Begin by gathering the children in a circle.
- Explain the activity: "Today, we're going to pretend to be different animals. We'll move like them, sound like them, and even think like them for a while."
- Show some pictures or cards of animals to spark their imagination. (You can use the images on the following page).
- Encourage the children to guess the animals and describe how they might move.

Warm-up (5 minutes)

- Start with a simple warm-up to prepare their bodies.
 - Ask the children to shake their arms and legs.
 - Stretch up high like a giraffe then stretch down low like a frog.
- You can play animal-themed music during the warm-up to set the mood.

Animal Movement Activity (15-20 minutes)

- Explain each animal's movement and ask the children to imitate it. Some examples are shown on the next page. You can also get the children to come up with their own.
- Encourage the children to move around the space, switching between animals. As they do this, you can guide them to be faster or slower, helping them focus on different speeds and coordination.

Cool-down (5 minutes)

- Help the children slow their bodies by guiding them through gentle stretches.
 - Stretch up like a tall giraffe and sit like a butterfly with your arms crossed like wings.
 - Deep breaths to calm down after all the excitement.
- Ask the children how they felt. Did they enjoy being different animals? What was their favorite animal to act like?

Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies

Activity card: Animal movement

Example animals

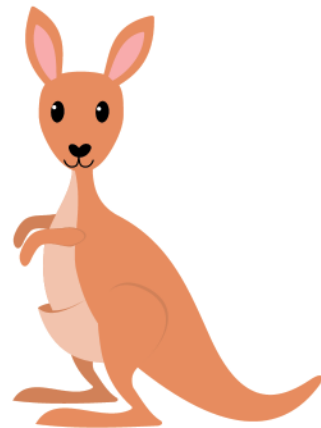
Crab walk

Bend your knees and half squat down like a crab. Shuffle from side to side and use your hands as pincers.



Kangaroo hops

Jump like a kangaroo! Hop with your legs together, arms forward.



Frog hop

Now, let's be frogs! Squat down low, put your hands on the floor, and then jump like a frog. Boing, boing.



Horse gallop

Gallop like a horse. Stand tall and bend your knees a little, lift one knee up high and then the other as you gallop.



Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies

Activity card: Animal movement

Example animals

Bear crawl

Now we're bears. Get down on your hands and feet and crawl across the floor, growling like a bear.



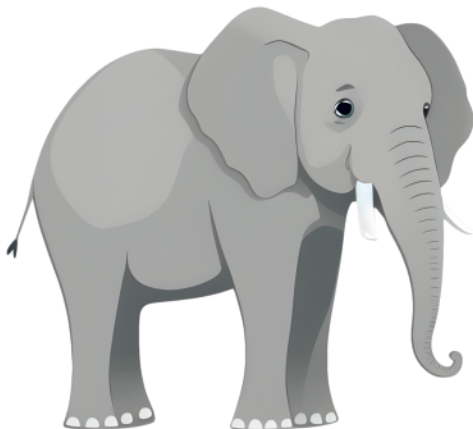
Penguin waddle

Waddle like a penguin. Keep your arms tucked in and shuffle side to side.



Elephant stomp

Let's be elephants. Stand tall and make big stomps with your feet while swinging your arm like a trunk.



Bird flap

Pretend to be birds flying! Open your arms wide and flap them up and down.



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Activity card: Dance freeze



Purpose

The goal of this activity is to get children moving to music and freezing in fun poses when the music stops. It helps develop their ability to listen, respond to rhythms and coordination.

Recommended age

Recommended for children from 3 years old and up.

Equipment required

- Space for children to move
- Music playlist with upbeat tunes

Instructions for activity

To start – Gather the children and explain the game

- "We're going to dance to the music, but when the music stops, we have to freeze in whatever position we're in!"
- "Let's make sure we're really still when the music stops. We might freeze like statues, animals or even silly shapes. You can be as creative as you like!"
- Demonstrate a couple of freeze poses yourself. For example, you can freeze as a tree (standing with arms up), a rock (sitting down in a ball) or an animal.
- Before starting the game, do a little warm-up to get the children moving and ready.
 - "Let's all stretch to the sky like we're reaching for the stars!"
 - "Now, let's wiggle our arms and legs, just like noodles."
 - "And finally, let's move our bodies side to side like we're swaying in the wind."
- Play some gentle music during the warm-up.

Dance Freeze Game (10–15 minutes)

- Start the music and encourage the children to dance freely around the space.
 - "Let's dance however we want — twirl, wiggle, hop or bounce."
- After a short time, stop the music suddenly and say, "Freeze!"
 - The children must stop moving and hold their position until the music starts again.
 - Check their freeze poses — make it a fun challenge by seeing who can freeze in the silliest, most creative way!
- After a few seconds of freezing, restart the music and encourage the children to start dancing again.

Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies

Activity card: Dance freeze



Extension ideas for activity

You can occasionally pause the music and make suggestions for a type of freeze, like:

- "Freeze like a tree!"
- "Freeze like a lion, ready to pounce!"
- "Freeze like a snowman!"

Variation (Optional)

- To add variety, you can include some "dance tasks" that the children need to do before they freeze. For example:
 - "Dance like you're swimming, and when the music stops, freeze like a fish!"
 - "Dance like you're hopping on the moon, and when the music stops, freeze like an astronaut!"
- You can also ask the children to come up with their own freeze poses as a group — perhaps taking turns leading the freeze in creative ways.

Cool-down (5 minutes)

- After playing a few rounds, help the children calm down by gradually slowing the music down and guiding them through a cool-down.
 - "Let's stretch and relax our bodies after all that fun dancing!"
 - You can suggest slow, gentle movements like swaying side to side or stretching their arms and legs.
 - "Now, let's sit down and breathe in and out slowly to calm our bodies."

Tips for Success

- Vary the music: Play different types of music (fast and slow) to help children experience different rhythms and tempos.
- Encourage creativity: Praise the children for their creativity in the freeze poses and dance moves.

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Activity card: Balloon bounce

Purpose

An easy and fun short activity to get children moving and help assist with hand and eye coordination, as well as teamwork.

Recommended age

This activity is suitable for children from 3 years old and up.

Equipment required

- Space for children to move
- Several balloons blown up

Instructions for activity

Instructions

- Gather the children into a clear space. Bring in the balloons and encourage the children to keep them in the air without touching the ground.
- Children can tap the balloons to keep them up.
- Children should try to work together to keep all the balloons in the air.

Extension

- To increase the difficulty of this activity, you can start with only a couple of balloons and keep increasing how many are released.
- This means the children need to work together to keep more and more balloons in the air.



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Activity card: Colour relay



Purpose

This game is an engaging way to help children develop teamwork skills and coordination.

Recommended age

This is best suited for children aged 3 or 4 years old.

Equipment required

- Space for children to move, preferably outside
- A variety of coloured balls
- Markers to designate start and finish lines
- Bucket at the starting line

Instructions for activity

Organise the space

Set up a course with a start line and a collection line. Make sure there is enough space for the children to run back and forth safely. Place the colored balls in a pile at the collection point.

Instructions

1. Split the children into teams of 3-4, depending on the group size. Each team should line up behind the starting line.
2. Explain the game: Tell the children that they will be participating in a fun relay race where they will need to run to the colored balls, pick up a specific color and bring it back to their team bucket.
3. Start the Relay:
 - The first child in each team will run to the pile of balls.
 - Call out a color (e.g., "Red!") for each child to find.
 - The child will then search for and grab the ball of that color.
 - Once they have the correct ball, they run back to their team and drop the ball into the bucket.
4. Next Player's Turn:
 - The second player repeats the same process, running to the balls and picking up a different color (or the same, depending on how you want to play).
 - The relay continues until each child has had a turn and all balls have been collected.
5. Winning Team: The first team to complete the relay race with all their children having a turn and collecting all the correct colored balls wins the game.

Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies



Activity card: Outdoor scavenger hunt

Purpose

This is an outdoor activity for children to explore nature, develop motor skills and problem-solving skills.

Recommended age

This activity is suitable for children aged 3 years and older.

Equipment required

- Outdoor space for children to explore
- List or pictures of items to collect or find (you can utilise the next page)
- Small bags for children to collect items

Instructions for activity

1. Choose the Outdoor Location: Select a safe outdoor area such as the service yard or an external park.
2. Prepare the Scavenger Hunt List: Print the pictures of items on the following page.
3. Divide the children into teams: Split the children into small teams of 2-3 (depending on the group size) to encourage teamwork and collaboration or you can get the children to find things individually. Give each team or children a picture list and a collection bag or container.
4. Set the Boundaries: Clearly explain the boundaries of the hunt. Clearly explain where children can and cannot go or where they should stay within the designated safe area.

Beginning the hunt

1. Explain the Rules:
 - Tell the children that they will be going on a scavenger hunt to find different items in the outdoor area. Show them the list or pictures and explain each item they are looking for.
 - Emphasize the importance of staying together as a team and only picking up safe items (e.g., not touching anything dangerous like sharp objects or poisonous plants).
 - Remind them to respect the environment and only collect natural items (or items they are sure are safe).
2. Finish the Hunt:
 - Once all teams have found their items or after a set time limit, gather the children back to the starting point. Each team can show off what they found and describe their items.

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Activity card: Outdoor
scavenger hunt

Outdoor scavenger hunt card

A green leaf



A smooth rock



A flower



A feather



An interesting stick



A piece of bark



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Activity card: Digging for treasure

Purpose

This activity helps engage children's sense of exploration and connection to nature. It will also help to develop fine motor skills.

Recommended age

This could be easily adapted to different ages.

Equipment required

- A sandpit or sensory tray filled with sand
- Small items to hide (e.g. toys such as dinosaurs or cars, or natural items such as rocks)
- Small shovels

Instructions for activity

Organise the space

- Set up your space for the activity either outside in a sandpit or using a sensory tray.
- Bury the small items within the sand. You could set this up with a theme in mind (such as pirate treasure or dinosaur fossils) or make the items random.

Instructions

- Once ready, encourage children to dig through the sand to find the items.
- Get them to explain what they find as they go and explore the item before digging to find another item.
- At the end of the activity you can use some reflection questions relevant to the theme.

Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies

Activity card: Colour run



Purpose

This is a simple, fun activity that gets children running and improving their spatial awareness.

Recommended age

This can be suitable for children from 3 years and older.

Equipment required

- Space for children to move that has some pavement
- Coloured chalk

Instructions for activity

Organise the space

- In your identified space, set up the activity by drawing coloured circles or squares on the pavement. The number you draw will depend on the number of children you have. Children can help draw the shapes.
- You can make the shapes varying sizes, so that a small shapes may fit only one child standing in it and a larger shape may fit several children.

Instructions

- Once the space is set up, gather the children to begin the game.
- Explain that you will call out a colour and children need to run to one of those coloured areas. Children need to have both feet on the colour to be 'safe'.
- Begin the game by calling out a colour. Once all children have got to the colour, call out a different colour.
- Continue to do this and gradually you can make it a competition between children.
- After a few goes, the child who gets to a colour last will be out.

Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies

Activity card: Balance beam exercise

Purpose

This is a simple, fun activity where children focus on balance and tuning into their bodies.

Recommended age

This can be suitable for children from 3 years and older.

Equipment required

- Space for children to move
- Soft balance beam
- Optional: additional small item to carry

Instructions for activity

Instructions

- In your identified space, set up the activity by arranging the soft balance beam. Children can help pull out the beam and set it up.
- Once the space is set up, gather the children to begin the game. Explain that they need to walk across the beam while taking notice of their feet.

Extension

- You can increase the difficulty by getting children to choose an item and carry this across the beam as well or stop at various intervals and lean forward or back on one foot.



Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies

Activity card: Dice game

Purpose

This is a simple, fun activity that gets children moving, running and jumping. This could be used as a transition activity.

Recommended age

This can be suitable for children from 3 years and older.

Equipment required

- Space for children to move
- Dice

Instructions for activity

Each number on the dice corresponds to an activity. Use the prompts below or encourage the children to come up with their own activity.

Roll the dice and the number that comes up is the movement the children perform.



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Activity card: Wobble board exercise



Purpose

This is a simple activity that challenges children's balance skills, body awareness and development.

Recommended age

This can be suitable for children from 3 years and older.

Equipment required

- Space for children to move
- Wobble board
- Optional: additional balls or beanbags for added difficulty.

Instructions for activity

Instructions

- In your identified space, set up the activity by arranging the wobble board on an even, flat surface. Place the balls or beanbag nearby.
- Once the space is set up, gather the children to begin. One child will be on the wobble board at one time, so this is best done with a small group or individual.
- Explain that they need to take notice of their body and move carefully on the wobble board. There are a variety of movements that they can complete.

Movement ideas

- Stand upright on the wobble board to balance.
- Carefully stand on one leg on the wobble board with the standing leg firmly planted into the board. Swap legs after a minute or two.
- Encourage gentle rocking from forwards to backwards while maintaining balance.
- Step on and step off the wobble board carefully.

Extension

- You can increase the difficulty by getting children to select an item and pass this to another child while balancing.
- The wobble board can also be incorporated into an obstacle course.

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Activity card: Windmill blowing

Purpose

This is a simple activity that can help children to calm emotions and self-regulate. It can assist with getting children to regain focus.

Recommended age

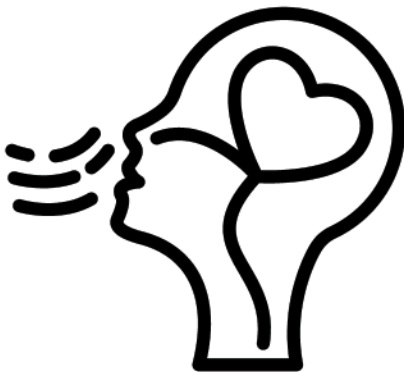
This can be suitable for children from 3 years and older.

Equipment required

- Paper windmill or bubble wand
- Balloon

Instructions for activity

- Encourage children to breathe in deeply and then blow out slow and steady.
- Use the windmill or bubble wand as an aid to assist with the breath out.



- You can also pair the breathing with a count or use a balloon.

Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies

Activity card: Pillow squashes

Purpose

This is a simple activity that can help children who seek proprioceptive input and pressure. It is a heavy work activity that can help them feel more regulated.

Recommended age

This can be suitable for children from 3 years and older.

Equipment required

- Soft, comfortable space for children
- Soft pillows or blankets

Instructions for activity

There are several ways that you can get the benefit from this activity. See options below:

Pillow/blanket sandwich: With the child lying down, gently press down on them with a cushion or blanket to apply pressure. They can also lie between two layers of cushions/blankets.

Cushion crawl: Place cushions/pillows on the floor in a line and encourage the child to crawl over them. Make it more fun by encouraging them to be an animal or pretend the floor is lava.

Cushion launch: With the child lying on their back, place a cushion between their legs. Encourage them to firmly hold it and then swing the legs up and launch it in the air. This is also great for core stability.



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Activity card: Finger trace

Purpose

This is a sensory-based activity to help with regulation and encourage mindfulness as well as building fine motor skills.

Recommended age

This can be suitable for children from 3 years and older.

Equipment required

- Outline for children to trace with their finger

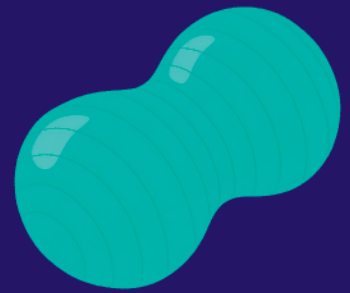
Instructions for activity

Encourage children to trace the below shapes with their fingers and bring focus to the task.



Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies

Activity card: Heavy work –
ball push



Purpose

Ball push activities are another way to engage children in heavy work activities to help with regulation and muscle activation.

Recommended age

This can be suitable for children from 3 years and older.

Equipment required

- Space for children to move
- Soft balls or peanut ball

Instructions for activity

There are various activities for this to be effective such as:

Ball squash: With a soft ball, encourage children to squash it between both hands and hold for a count of 20 to 30. Repeat this a few times.

Peanut ball wall press: With the peanut ball, place it in front of a wall. Have the child push against it (with the ball going into the wall) with either their hands or their back and hold for 10 seconds.

Peanut ball rolling: Have the child lay on the peanut ball on their stomach. Get them to walk their hands out in front of them on the floor while maintaining balance.

Group ball push: Get children to sit in a circle and, using a heavier ball (if available), get children to push the ball to one another across the circle.

Line push: Tape a line onto the floor and get children to push the ball along the floor following the line. Increase the difficulty by making them go fast or slow.

Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies

Activity card: Emotions ball



Purpose

This activity supports children to explore and discuss their feelings.

Recommended age

This can be suitable for children from 3 years and older.

Equipment required

- Space for children to move
- Colourful emotions ball

Instructions for activity

There are various ways to use the emotions ball. Activities for this include:

Emotion ball toss

- With the emotions ball, encourage children to pass the ball to one another. When they catch the ball get them to look at the emotion face that one of their thumbs lands on.
- Ask the child to name what the emotion is. As an extension, they can name a time that they experienced the emotion.

Emotions check-in circle

- During group time get the children to pass or roll the ball to one another.
- Each time a child receives the ball, ask them to choose the emotion face that best matches how they are feeling.

Emotions guessing game

- Have the children gather in a circle. Children pass or roll the ball to one another.
- The child with the ball chooses an emotion to act out while the other children guess what emotion it is.
- Once guessed correctly, the ball is passed on.

Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies

Staff activity ideas

Early years educators are key role models for promoting positive health and wellbeing. Looking after yourself also means that not only will you feel great but it will help you have energy for the children in your care.

Ideas for how staff can get active

Start your staff meeting with a 10-minute walk or stretching session. This will also help boost productivity and focus.

Organise a staff walk before or after work. This could become a weekly group walk.

Set up a competition that staff can participate in. This could be seeing which staff member can achieve the highest amount of steps across a week.

For a team-building activity, look into attending a yoga or pilates class as a group.

Place some stretching cards in the staff room to encourage staff to stretch throughout the day.



Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies

Staff wellbeing and regulation
ideas

Early years educators are key role models for promoting positive health and wellbeing. Implementing regulation strategies into your day can help ensure that you approach the day with clarity.

Ideas for how staff can implement regulation strategies

Practice box breathing: 4-second breath in, 4-second hold, 4-second breath out and 4-second hold.

Ground your body and bring your mind back. Press your feet firmly into the ground or back and arms into a chair and notice the sensation.

Ensure there is an outdoor space available for staff to take breaks and notice the surroundings.

Engage in gentle movement such as a brief walk, shoulder rolls or stretches.

Engage in a sensory reset. This could be holding a warm mug, a cold drink bottle or pausing to notice what you can hear or feel.



Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies

Additional resources: Active
play

Websites

1

Raising Children's Network

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/toddlers/nutrition-fitness/physical-activity/physical-activity-how-much>

2

NSW Munch and Move

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/toddlers/nutrition-fitness/physical-activity/physical-activity-how-much>

3

Make your move – sit less, be active for life – family guide

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/toddlers/nutrition-fitness/physical-activity/physical-activity-how-much>

Books:

1

Are you Wiggly by Tim Button (Author), Ana Larrañaga



2

Stomp, Wiggle, Clap, and Tap – My First Book of Dance By: Rachelle Burk



3

I Got the Rhythm By: Connie Schofield-Morrison, Frank Morrison



4

Clap Your Hands By: Lorinda Bryan Cauley



Calming our Minds, Moving our Bodies

Additional resources: Emotional
regulation

Websites

1

Raising Children's Network

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/development/preschoolers-social-emotional-development>

2

Be You

<https://beyou.edu.au/>

3

Emerging Minds

<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/in-focus-understanding-childrens-emotions-and-behaviour/>

Books

1

The Color Monster By: Anna Llenas



2

Breathing Makes it Better By: Christopher Willard and Wendy O'Leary



3

Little Monkey Calms Down By: Michael Dah; and Oriol Vidal



4

Today I Feel... By: Madalena Moniz

