

# Helping My Sensory Needs

## Everyday situations: Visiting the Park



- Visiting the park can be a great learning and growing opportunity for health and fitness, coordination, play skills and social skills.
- Park visits can be challenging for parents due to not knowing if other people will be there or pets, and when the spaces are not fenced off.
- Some planning can help make a park visit successful, for children with additional needs.

### **Consider the sensory experience for your child:**

Wide open spaces to run, swings for movement, climbing frames for deep pressure in the muscles, noises from traffic, pets, other children, sunlight, changing textures of the ground from grass to paths to soft fall. If they have some trouble learning how to move their body, some situations or equipment might be scary.

### **Choose the Park:**

Search online, ask local parents, go for a walk and explore local areas to find a park. Consider: size of the area, noise levels from traffic, fences and gates, dog areas nearby, availability of swings or climbing frames. Are there toilet or nappy change facilities around?

### **Choose what to take with you:**

- Food & water
- Sunscreen, hat
- Insect repellent
- A mat to sit on
- A ball to play with
- Shoes



### **Choose when to go:**

Consider what time of day your child is most likely to be happy and calm.

Consider making a visual schedule: a set of pictures to represent each step of the activity. For example: walk, park, walk, home. This helps your child predict what is coming next. You can use photos, drawings or pictures, it can be on your phone or in a printed copy.

Consider using an object of reference, if they find it hard to understand words, this could be a ball, or a hat.

### **Prepare your Child:**

Take videos or photos of their siblings or friends at the park for them to watch.

Walk past the park a few times before trying a visit. On the day, if they are able to understand, explain 'now walk, next park'.



### **Help them Play, Play with them!**

Encourage them to try new things, praise them for great play, say 'wow!' when they show you what they're playing with. Sing songs, go on a treasure hunt, play hide and seek, have races, try to see if they can catch you.