



## FEBRUARY 2024 POTS NEWSLETTER



### “If you love them, they will grow.”

When I moved to a new neighborhood I had to interview 2-year-old programs all over again. My first question was always about the school's philosophy. As an experienced mom and an even more experienced pediatric OT, I had high standards for caring, connecting, warmth, and play. However, in those dark days, upscale schools pitched themselves as stepping stones to the Ivy Leagues, replete with lessons and devoid of play. When I popped in on a laid-back, Israeli gan-style school whose philosophy was, “If you love them they will grow,” I found my child's new home, and now my grandchildren's, for 35 years and counting. In their moments of self-doubt, my mantra to parents always is, if you love your child for who they are and celebrate them for their uniqueness they will flourish. No amount of skill, information, or biddy baseball can compensate for a warm embracing environment full of unconditional love and acceptance. If you love your children, they will grow.

With sincere dedication,

*Dr. Chaya Lamm Warburg*

Director, Pediatric Occupational Therapy Services

## Feeding and Self-Regulation Sanam-style

### 1. What inspired you to work in pediatric occupational therapy?

As a pediatric Occupational Therapist, there is no other job that allows you to play as a career! I chose pediatrics specifically because helping children increase self-confidence, maintain peer relationships, and learn new skills is the ultimate reward. Not only do we work with children, but we work with their families and provide them with a new set of skills to better assist their children in day-to-day tasks and routines.



Book a 15-Minute Free  
Consultation



## **2. What are the most common challenges parents face? How can OT help?**

Mealtimes are meant to be fun, social experiences. However, they can be extremely stressful for some families! Many children have sensory aversions to food, including texture, smell, and taste. Most children with feeding challenges have a limited food repertoire and variety of food options, impacting appropriate mealtime interactions (remaining seated at the table and using a distractor such as an iPad or TV), family outings, and eating out at a restaurant. As a feeding therapist and OT, I guide parents on how to slowly wean the child off the distractor, ways to increase food variety and exposure, and encourage food play. Exposure, consistency, and patience are key!

## **3. Can you elaborate on the intersection between sensory processing and feeding therapy? How do these aspects intertwine in your treatment plans?**

Sensory processing refers to how the nervous system receives and interprets sensory information from the environment, including taste, smell, texture, and temperature. When it comes to feeding therapy, this intersection is crucial because sensory issues can significantly impact a child's ability to eat a variety of foods. Feeding therapy incorporates many aspects of sensory integration techniques to help children tolerate and process sensory stimuli associated with eating. This includes gradual exposure, desensitization, and adapting the environment (i.e., seating arrangements, lighting, noise levels, etc.).

## **4. What innovative methods or strategies do you employ to engage children who might initially resist or struggle with feeding therapy?**

Targeted sensory preparation is crucial in feeding therapy. Children engage in proprioceptive activities such as pushing, pulling, jumping, and marching to regulate and calm their bodies in preparation for therapy meals. I also provide verbal and/or visual support to children, so they know what to expect in terms of the session and what is expected of them.



## **5. What is therapeutic listening and how does it work?**

Therapeutic Listening is a sound-based intervention that utilizes controlled sound to influence the nervous system. It can be effective in influencing arousal, sensory modulation, and motor planning, to improve focus, attention, and academics. It can also be used to facilitate social interaction. Therapeutic Listening is delivered via cordless headphones while children are engaging in seated tasks. The children typically love the music selections and ask for the music during sessions!

## **6. What improvements have you observed in the child's behavior or development from using Therapeutic Listening?**

I have seen improvements in sustained attention, focus, social interaction including initiating conversation and eye contact, and improved motor planning, voice modulation, body awareness, and self-regulation.

## **7. What role does collaboration with other healthcare professionals play to ensure a holistic approach in addressing the needs of children in OT?**

Collaboration is an integral part of the job. Many of the children we see are also receiving other services. Collaborating with physical therapists, teachers, speech therapists, ABA therapists, parents, etc. can provide comprehensive care and support, considering all aspects of a child's development. Collaboration takes place in the form of meetings (Zoom or in-person) and emails.



**8. What advice would you offer to parents or caregivers who suspect their child might benefit from occupational therapy?**

Parents know their children the best! If a parent suspects that their child is having sensory processing or feeding challenges, call an Occupational Therapist for a consultation and schedule an evaluation! Parents shouldn't be made to feel alone in this process, and seeking help is the best first step in ensuring their child reaches his/her full potential.

**9. If you had to pick one superhero power to assist you in occupational therapy sessions, what would it be, and how would it help the children?**

The superhero power I would pick is to read minds and feel what is going on in the child's body. Many of my children are unable to articulate their emotions and where in their bodies they feel emotions, leading to difficulty with self-regulation and homeostatic functions. If I was able to tune into their minds and bodies, I'd be able to identify barriers to therapy, bridge gaps in verbal expression and communication, monitor physical responses to stimuli, and detect pain/discomfort to provide tailored interventions and promote independence.

**10. If you could transform your therapy room into any fictional world for a day, which one would you choose, and how might it impact your sessions?**

Love this question! I am a big Star Wars fan, so I would love to be transported into that world! This theme may increase a child's engagement and motivation, as well as imagination and creativity to explore different fine motor and gross motor activities within the Star Wars universe.



## Leave a review, send a few! Show some love to your POTS Therapist this Valentine's Day!

We'd be so grateful if you would take a few seconds to leave your therapist a Google review and share your happy experiences. For every Google review your therapist or POTS staffer receives, we will add an extra flower to their Valentine's bouquet.

Scan this code to leave a review at  
POTS Teaneck



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## Can You Stream The Love Tonight? Building Emotional Intelligence Through Film: 4 Must-Watch Movies for Kids

Understanding emotions and developing emotional intelligence are vital skills for children's growth and development. Movies can be a powerful tool to spark discussions between parents and children, teach valuable lessons about emotions and how to cope with them. Age recommendations by [raisingchildren.net.au](http://raisingchildren.net.au)



### 1. "Inside Out" (2015) Rated PG

Set in the mind of an 11-year-old girl named Riley, this Pixar gem personifies her emotions—Joy, Sadness, Fear, Anger, and Disgust—as characters navigating her life's challenges. "Inside Out" vividly illustrates the complexity of emotions, teaching kids that it's okay to feel different emotions and the importance of acknowledging and understanding them. Citing the American Psychological Association, movies like "Inside Out" aid children in recognizing and understanding emotions, fostering emotional literacy from an early age. Recommended for children ages 9+.

### 2. "The Lion King" (1994) Rated PG

Beyond its stunning animation and memorable songs, "The Lion King" delves into themes of loss, grief, and self-discovery. It encourages kids to confront their emotions, understand the cycle of life, and navigate challenging situations with courage and compassion. Studies from the American Academy of Pediatrics emphasize the importance of media in discussing emotions with children, making "The Lion King" an impactful conversation starter. Recommended for children ages 10+.





### 3. "Wonder" (2017) Rated R

"Wonder" tells the story of a boy with a physical disability facing the challenges of fitting in at a new school. The main message of "Wonder" is to look beneath the surface and accept others based on their character. Emotions explored include empathy, acceptance, kindness, inclusion, bullying, and self-esteem. Recommended for children ages 8-13.

### 4. "Big Hero 6" (2014) Rated PG

This action-packed film revolves around a young robotics prodigy and his inflatable robot companion, Baymax. Amidst thrilling adventures, "Big Hero 6" subtly explores grief, friendship, and healing. It showcases the importance of emotional support and expressing feelings in times of distress. Recommended for children ages 10+.



**From a pediatric occupational therapy standpoint, movies with emotional theme offer multifaceted benefits for:**

- **Communication:** Movies that parents, teachers and therapists watch together with children serve as great conversation starters, to encourage open communication about emotions and relate them to real-life experiences.
- **Emotion Identification:** They help children recognize and label different emotions, which in turn help children identify their own emotions.
- **Empathy and Social Skills:** By showcasing characters' emotional experiences, these films encourage empathy and understanding of others' feelings.
- **Coping Strategies:** Using the characters as models, kids can learn about healthy ways to cope with emotions and challenges.



# POTS Therapists' Recommendations for a Snowy Day



## Chaye's Top Picks



### Tricky Fingers (ages 4+)

Sit by the fire and cozy up to move the marbles in your box to copy patterns on a card that get progressively more challenging. This game that can be played alone or with friends sharpens proprioception in the fingers, fine motor skills, visual perception and executive function.

### Thomas' Snowsuit by Robert Munsch

On snowy days, I like to snuggle under the covers and read to my grandchildren! My favorite author is Robert Munsch, whose kid heroes are always hilarious and a tad irreverent. One of my biggest treats was hearing him do reading for kids in Toronto in the 1990's. Thomas refused to wear his ugly brown snowsuit despite the pleas of his mother, his teacher, and even his principal. Thomas leaves them in weirdly dressed chaos, only to skip out when his friends ask him to play.



## Leah's Top Picks



### Playskool Sit 'n Spin Classic Spinning Activity Toy for Toddlers Ages Over 18 Months

The sit 'n spin gives children the opportunity to keep moving while stuck inside on a cold snowy day. As children use their hands to rotate the Sit 'n Spin they generate vestibular input that's better tolerated than input that a grown-up imposes.

### Snowball Maker Tool with Handle for Snow Ball Fights, Fun Winter Outdoor Activities and More, For Kids and Adults

The snowball maker makes playing in the snow so much fun while working on bilateral coordination (using the hands together).



**Note:** Scan the QR code beside the product image to shop.





## Sanam's Top Picks



### Break the Ice, Save the Penguin (age 4-8 years)

Break the ice, but don't let the penguin fall through! This game can be played alone or with friends/family and works on pressure gradation, hand-eye coordination, frustration tolerance, and turn taking.

### Scooter board

Movement and play is important on a snowy day. Use the scooter board to move yourself and stuffed animals/action figures/dolls for a ride. There are many different ways to go on the scooter board, including on your stomach, back, and in sitting.



## Asia's Top Picks



### Snow fort mold

Build snow forts in the winter from this large snow brick mold. Create giant structures and move these heavy blocks to have some fun while working on regulation.

### Snow tube

This toy is a great choice for a snowy day. Get outside and get moving with this inflatable sled. Have fun gliding through the snow, down hills, spinning, you can even make it a race for the entire family.



**Note:** Click on the product image or name to shop.



## Ariela's Top Picks



SANO

### Sensory Body Sock

There are so many fun games to play with a body sock! You can: 1) Put on music and dance in the body sock. If you have two or more, choreograph a silly dance with a friend or sibling. 2) Hold yoga poses for 5–10 seconds. The combination of pushing against resistance and applying deep pressure to the skin enhances body awareness and is calming.

### Weighted Blanket

If you have not tried a weighted blanket yet, tis' the season! The only thing more calming than a cozy blanket, is a cozy weighted blanket.



## KB's Top Picks



### Noise Cancelling Headphones

While everyone is so busy making plans for skiing, sledding and snowball fights, it is important to remember the value of just sitting and being. Try some calming music in a bean bag for some quality down time together.

### Zipline Kids Modular Sofa

Spend some quality time with your child building a fort! Use these modules plus blankets, sheets, and pillows, and spend some quality nonscreen time with your child and activate their imagination!




Scan this code to visit our Amazon Storefront!



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