

# How to guide...Weighted Blankets



## What are they?

Unlike a typical blanket, the one we associate with getting cosy and snuggling up in, a weighted blanket is a therapeutic tool. The blanket is filled with materials to make it exactly what it says in the title – a blanket that is weighted down. The weight within the blanket is evenly distributed and safe for children to use within the classroom. The weight provides deep pressure to the body which therapeutically supports the child and is brilliant for sensory regulation and supports children to be in an appropriate state of regulation to learn within the classroom.

## Who would use them?

A weighted blanket is perfect for children who require stimulation of their proprioceptive sense. It helps them to develop a greater awareness of their body, and supports them to focus, as well as enabling them to feel grounded. It is a 'go to' resource for children with sensory integration disorder, sensory processing issues, and ADHD. Children with Autism (due to sensory processing difficulties) and Down's Syndrome may also benefit. However, be mindful that not all children with these conditions will find a weighted blanket beneficial, and it must be provided as a tool that supports the unique individual, not just something given to every child with a diagnosis. Equally, a child may present with the need for a weighted blanket without having a diagnosis at all and if it meets their need then we would also provide one for them.

## Why would they be used?

With the use of a weighted blanket, children who are sensory seeking are able to develop a greater awareness of their body, focus and relax. The weight applies pressure to the body which stimulates the proprioceptive sense. Proprioception is one of body's senses that isn't widely known about but is incredibly important. It is the sense that tells our brain about our body's position and movement. We use our proprioceptive sense to control direction, speed, and extent of our bodily movements. If we are sensory seeking or having difficulty with our sensory processing, the pressure appeals to our proprioceptive sense which in turn can improve concentration, have a calming effect, and reduce repetitive sensory-seeking behaviour.

Children who are experiencing anxiety or stress may also benefit from the use of a weighted blanket due to the calming effect it can have on the body. The pressure from the blanket can contribute to a sense of security and comfort which helps the child to feel safe and secure, and again in a more appropriate state of regulation to learn.

Children who find it difficult to attend to learning or focus may also benefit from the use of a weighted blanket. The weighted blanket can help with the feeling of 'being anchored' into the chair, creating a clearer focus within the immediate environment and supporting better concentration.



## How are they used?

The first thing to do when considering the use of a weighted blanket would be to consult with the child and their parents. It's really important that the right-sized weighted blanket is used for the child.

**It is recommended that weighted equipment should be no more than 5 – 10% of the child's body weight so this should be checked before use.**

Once the appropriately sized blanket has been sourced you can begin to gradually introduce the use of the weighted blanket to allow the child to become accustomed to the feeling and sensation. You may like to, in discussion with the child, pinpoint particular sessions or activities whereby you feel the weighted blanket will be particularly beneficial for them to use. For example, high-concentration tasks such as quiet reading, or completing writing tasks.

### In summary...

A weighted blanket can be a really useful tool to support children with specific sensory needs to access the learning environment within the busy classroom, in a calming and regulated way.

For more information, visit: <https://www.tts-group.co.uk/calming-weighted-blanket/1008618.html>

Many thanks to Ruth Lue-Quee @mymummyteacher for writing this for us.

