

## PHYSIOTHERAPY IDEAS FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS AT HOME



Obstacle courses are a great way to build up children's strength and coordination but it should not be a free for all as then children don't get the full benefits of doing it and they can get hurt. These ideas were shared weekly through Zoom and WhatsApp as part of a virtual support programme for the children and parents / facilitators of Chaeli Cottage Preschool and Enrichment Centre during lockdown. The physiotherapy ideas were complemented by weekly ideas from the attending speech therapist and occupational therapist and daily ideas from their teacher. Parents also had access to their child's cooperatively developed Individual Education Plan.

If children are well supervised / facilitated through the obstacle course then there is a lot they can learn from this activity:

- To wait their turn and encourage others
- To do things more slowly and with care
- To step out of their comfort zone and overcome fear
- Build whole body muscle strength
- Improve whole body coordination
- Develop depth perception

It is also important to make sure that the activity is doable / adapted for your child so that they are sure to gain confidence in their own ability. It is even more fun for children when their parents and siblings join in.

Start small with 2 - 3 stations. Don't worry about needing to have different stations every time you do it, children like the consistency as they then feel better prepared and are more able to be successful. If you feel it is becoming too easy for them you can try and make the station more difficult by making things higher / lower, adding something extra or doing more repetitions.

An obstacle course is a wonderful way for children to get rid of some excess energy.

If it is possible to do physical activity at a similar time every day it is a great way to help create a routine and, in this way, manage challenging behaviour. Most of all it is an opportunity for the family to laugh and have fun together.

## Station 1

Use the sofa to crawl on, over and off (hands first) and then use sofa cushions as an unstable base for throwing and catching.

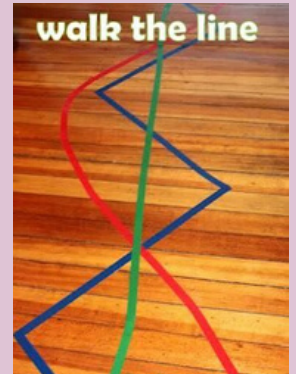
Throwing and catching can be done while sitting for those with poor standing balance.



## Station 2

Heel-toe / tip-toe / heel walk along a straight / curved / zigzag line.

For those children in buggies or wheelchairs push them in circles / figure of eights / changes of direction.



## Station 3

Climbing under and over garden chairs.

Being rolled up in a blanket or carpet and then unrolled for all children, but in particular those with more severe disabilities.



## Station 5

Walk with a ball between your legs a certain distance and then turn around and go back.

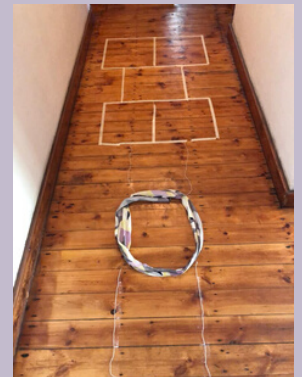
Use the plastic ball to give a massage/sensory input for those with more severe disabilities.



## Station 4

Make a hopscotch course using tape, a plastic bag, rope or chalk. Children should be able to hop on one leg when they are around 4 years old and for those who can't manage yet they can practice by jumping with 2 legs and then balance on one leg when they are in the single blocks.

For children with disabilities they can lie on their tummies and trace the lines with their hand / sit and trace the lines with their feet.



## Station 7

Star jumps or jumping jacks. We only expect children to be able to do this around the age of 5 years so don't worry if they can't do it yet. You can adapt the star jumps or jumping jacks to doing just the legs or arms, even this takes a lot of coordination.

For children with physical limitations, together you can make star shapes on the floor as a lovely movement experience and to stretch tight muscles.



## Station 6

Throwing/shooting a ball into a hoop. You can make your own hoop using a wire coat hanger that you cover to make it safe. Hang the hoop higher/lower to make it easier/more difficult.

For children with physical disabilities you can attach the hoop to the side of the wheelchair/buggy for facilitated hand over hand rolling of the ball and then pushing it into the hoop.

