

**WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES**  
**CHILDREN'S OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY**  
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## **How is my engine running?**

### **What is my engine?**

The engine refers to your child's activity and energy/emotional level. Many children and young people find it challenging to be in control of their own activity and emotional level. This may be referred to as self-regulation difficulties.

### **How does the scale work?**

The scale is designed to help your child to become more aware of his/her activity and energy/emotional level in order to improve their self regulation.

Ask your child to think about themselves as a car. Focus on the engine of a car as the important piece of equipment that makes the car move at the different speeds of fast, slow, and an optimal speed which we call "just right". It may actually help to take your child out in the car while discussing this respectively.

Ask your child frequently throughout their day, how their engine is running. Ask them to tell you and show you by moving the marker using the pictures of transport.

Once your child understands this part, try to encourage him/her to relate the three engine speeds to their body.

Discuss how if their engine is running slow, it maybe means they feel a bit tired or sleepy like the picture shows, and that this is not a good engine level for working or getting things done. The fast picture shows a child jumping up and down, again not able to complete their work. Explain that it is ok for them to be fast and slow at different times, but that when we need to work, or focus on specific tasks such as eating our meal, getting dressed, craft activities, playing games, our engine needs to run "just right". The just right picture displays a child lying down to do their homework.

Again, frequently ask them how their engine is running and ask them to show you, using the body activity pictures. When you feel your child has a good understanding of this relationship, ask them how their engine is running throughout their day, particularly following different experiences.

The following are some examples to try:

- trampoline
- being squashed by cushions

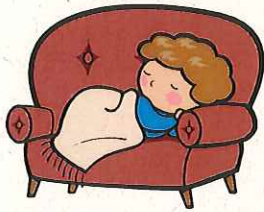
- running outside
- visits to play park
- feeling playdough or other tactile toys
- listening to different types of music
- wearing headphones with different music/story
- eating fruit juice ice cubes
- eating different textures of foods e.g. raw carrot which is crunchy, to yogurt.

Try some of these ideas and there are many more everyday activities that affect how our engine runs. They might affect each person's engine differently. It is important that you help your child recognise how their body is responding to the experiences, continuing to use the scale. It might be fun to keep a note of your child's responses in a fun jotter.

Once they find some ideas or a combination of ideas that help them reach the "just right" level, try to include these into everyday life at times when your child is to be more focused to carry out tasks.

How is my engine running?

SLOW



JUST RIGHT



FAST



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SLOW



JUST RIGHT



FAST

