



## **THE WILBARGER APPROACH for SENSORY DEFENSIVENESS**

### **Deep Pressure and Proprioceptive Technique**

**Purpose:** The Wilbarger Approach, developed by two occupational therapists, Patricia and Julia Wilbarger, is to be used to decrease sensory defensiveness and improve overall state of arousal. Additional benefits may include enhanced body awareness.

#### **Materials:**

1. This protocol requires a surgical scrub brush that does not scratch, tickle, or itch.
2. Keep the brush in a sealed plastic bag or plastic container to prevent drying of bristles so that the brush doesn't scratch. Be aware of wear and tear; check the brush before each use.

#### **DPPT Protocol:**

1. Provide deep pressure with brush to the individual's arms, legs, and the back. Deep pressure to hands and feet may be done if requested by the individual or recommended by the therapist.
2. Apply very firm pressure using long predictable strokes. Apply as much pressure as possible. The brush must remain in a horizontal position while brushing.
3. DO NOT brush from skin to clothing. Brushing should occur on skin only or clothing only.
4. Compressions are given as 10 quick presses to the key joints of the upper and lower extremity. OR have the individual do wall push-ups, or "bouncing", jumping up and down and push on the individual's arms. You **must** follow the protocol using the brush with deep pressure joint compression to all joints of the arms and legs. This special combination of sensations is thought to create a summation of sensation that produces charges.
5. The DPPT Protocol takes approximately two minutes each application.
6. During the first two weeks, it is best to repeat every 1 ½ to 2 hours when the individual is awake for the most effective and long lasting changes. Maintain the frequency for as many weeks as possible. Deep touch pressure input is thought to make neurochemical changes that can last for up to 1 ½ hours. It appears that when the protocol is done consistently over time, defensiveness to touch as well as other sensory input can be permanently diminished or eliminated.
7. It is recommended that you maintain physical contact with the person throughout the entire protocol of deep pressure and compressions. Keeping constant touch with your other hand is helpful (such as on the shoulder).