



Activity Guide

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Dear Customer,

Thank you for buying an Octaband® product. We hope that your use of the Octaband® with clients, family and friends brings you much enjoyment and a greater appreciation of your relationships with one another.

I originally developed the Octaband® as a dance / movement therapy prop, but have been pleased to discover that it is being used with great success not only by dance/movement therapists, but also music, expressive, play, occupational, physical and recreation therapists, activities directors, special needs teachers, general education teachers, social workers and team builders. Many therapists have found the Octaband® especially effective for use with children with special needs and with people with dementia, including Alzheimer's disease.

Practitioners have shared with me many stories about how the Octaband® motivates their clients, making fitness and movement activities fun, while providing such benefits as:

- Promoting individuality and creativity
- Building social connection
- Inviting inclusiveness
- Reinforcing group cohesion
- Heightening alertness
- Encouraging cooperation
- Focusing attention
- Enhancing liveliness
- Stimulating imagination

We'd love to hear how you are using the Octaband®. Please email with questions and feedback at danceforconnection@gmail.com.

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GETTING STARTED

Using the Octaband®

There are unlimited ways to use the Octaband®. However, when using the Octaband® for the first time with a group, it is safest to start out with a simple activity of your choice. Some suggestions for basic initial activities include:

- Creatively moving the arms of the Octaband® to music
- Playing Simon Says
- Maintaining the shape of a circle while moving as a whole group

Be sure to monitor all Octaband® activities carefully. Participants should be supervised at all times when using the Octaband®.

Using the Activity Guide

Once you have familiarized a group with the Octaband®, feel free to use your imagination to come up with activities. The Octaband® Activity Guide offers some activity suggestions to get you started, organized by participant age group: Infants/Toddlers, Young Children (age 3-5 yrs.), Older Children, Adolescents and Adults, and Older Adults with Disabilities. Many activities are appropriate for people of all abilities within each age range. Other activities in this guide include strategies for modifying the structure for participants with special needs. The Octaband® is a tool that everyone can enjoy!

PART 1

Activities for Infants & Toddlers

Infants and toddlers love moving their bodies in coordination with their caregivers during directed movement activities. The Octaband® can add additional intrigue and increase focus during caregiver-child movement activities. Because safety is of utmost importance when using the Octaband® with infants and toddlers, each of the following lesson plans includes step-by-step instructions for introducing the activity and setting expectations before getting started.

Please note that all Octaband® activities with infants and toddlers should occur with one-to-one adult supervision.

ACTIVITY IDEA

Row Your Boat

With hand-over-hand help from adults, infants/toddlers grip the Octaband® and move their bodies in a rowing motion to the song, “Row Your Boat.”

Age: Infants & Toddlers

NOTE: All activities with this age group should be done with one-on-one adult supervision.

Materials: Octaband®

Targeted Skills:

Alertness

Imitation of Movement

Coordination

Joint Attention

Relationship Bonding

Instructions:

Step 1: Introduce Activity & Set Expectations

Spread the Octaband® on the floor.

Ask adults to sit with their legs spread with infant/toddler seated in front of them.

Have each adult take one or two arms of the Octaband® and allow the infant/toddler to grasp the handle.

Adults should place their hands over the infant/toddlers’ hands to secure a grip on the Octaband®.

Step 2: Play the Game!

As a group sing, “Row Your Boat”:

*Row, row, row your boat,
Gently down the stream.
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily
Life is but a dream.*

Adults should rock their torsos toward and away from the center of the circle to the rhythm of the song, rocking the infant/toddlers with each movement.

Sing the song several times. During the last time singing the song, adults can try sitting still while singing and watch how the infants/toddlers move on their own to the song.

Accommodations:

Infants/Toddlers who cannot sit upright independently should lean back on adults for upper body and head support.

Activity Extension:

Toddlers, one at a time can sit on the circle in the middle , while the others shake the legs. Young children often enjoy being the center of attention.

You can also add the following verse:

*And if you see a crocodile
Don't forget to scream
Waaah!*

Children row faster and faster until they get back to land.

PART 2

Activities for Young Children (Age 3-5 yrs.)

Young children find movement activities both engaging and exciting. When leading movement structures with children, one of the major challenges is managing the excitement level of the young participants. The Octaband® is a natural behavior management tool, as it provides cohesion and focus to movement structures with young children. When using the Octaband® with groups of young children, introducing the activity thoughtfully can help set the tone for a successful and fun experience. The activity ideas in this section begin with introductory steps designed to modulate the level of stimulation so that the group is energized yet under control. Octaband® activities with young children should be carefully supervised by an adult at all times.

ACTIVITY IDEA

Name Game

In this “follow the leader” structure, individual children have the chance to share a creative movement with the group while the activity leader sings a catchy song about each child’s name. The group then imitates each child’s movement.

Age: Young Children (Age 3-5 yrs.)

Materials: Octaband®

Targeted Skills:

Creative Self Expression through Movement

Embodiment

Coordination

Imitation of Movement

Attention

Awareness of Others

Instructions:

Step 1: Introduce Activity & Set Expectations

Tell children that they will be playing a fun movement structure with their names.

Reassure them that everyone who wants a turn will have one.

Tell them that for this structure we will stay in our spots (not walk around), but can move our bodies while staying in our spots.

Explain how to play the structure in simple language; avoid demonstrating a sample movement, as this can limit children’s creativity.

If possible, choose a relatively outgoing child to have the first turn, as this child’s active participation will set the tone for the rest of the activity. As the child performs a movement, imitate it yourself and encourage the rest of the children to imitate it.

Step 2: Play the Game!

Have each child hold on to a loop at the end of an Octaband® leg. This structure can be played with children holding either one or two loops each.

Each child gets a turn to perform a creative movement that the rest of the group will imitate.

During the child’s turn, the activity leader sings a song featuring that child’s name:

Example name: Lucy

Lucy Lucy bo boosy

*Banana fana fo foosy
Me my mo moosy
Lucy!*

Example name: Sam
*Sam Sam bo bam
Banana fana fo fam
Me my mo mam
Sa-am!*

Accommodations:

Some children feel shy when asked to create a movement. It's important to respect the child's comfort level. If a child does not want a turn, ask if they would like a turn at the end of the structure.

It's common for young children to imitate each other's movements rather than coming up with something original. If several children repeat each other's ideas, praise their movements, and ask if they can create yet another new one.

Children may need to play this structure several times over a period of time in order to feel comfortable, understand the structure, and participate fully.

ACTIVITY IDEA

Beanbag Bounce

Children balance a beanbag in the center of the Octaband® while walking in a circle and singing a song. At the end of the song the group "pops" the beanbag into the air.

Age: Young Children (Age 3-5 yrs.)

Materials: Octaband®; beanbag (ideally, a beanbag shaped like an animal)

Targeted Skills:

Balance
Embodiment
Body Awareness
Coordination
Attention
Teamwork

Instructions:

Step 1: Introduce Activity & Set Expectations

Tell children that they will be playing a structure with the Octaband® and a beanbag.

Tell them that for this structure we will walk around in a circle and try to balance the beanbag until the very end of the song.

Practice the structure one time sitting down (not walking) with the beanbag placed in the middle of the Octaband®. Have everyone hold one handle and sing the song for the children, demonstrating when to “pop” the beanbag into the air.

Step 2: Play the Game!

Have each child hold on to a loop at the end of an Octaband® leg.

Place the beanbag on the center of the Octaband®.

Have each child hold one or more loops in one hand.

The group walks in a circle, balancing the beanbag.

While walking, sing “Pop Goes the Weasel” or another song that has a clear climax at the end:

*All around the cobbler’s bench
The monkey chased the weasel
The monkey thought ‘twas all in fun
Pop! Goes the weasel.*

*A penny for a spool of thread,
A penny for a needle,
That’s the way the money goes,
Pop! Goes the weasel.*

On the word, “Pop,” of each verse the group can shake the Octaband® to pop the beanbag in the air.

Change the direction in which you are walking with each new verse.

Activity Extensions:

For children unable to walk, continue bouncing the Octaband® while seated, keeping the beanbag on the center until popping the beanbag in the air on the word “Pop”.

For an added challenge, have children balance a beanbag on each of their own heads while walking in the circle.

For another challenge, have children skip in a circle while balancing the beanbag on the center of the Octaband®.

ACTIVITY IDEA

Imagination & Movement

The bright colors and unique shape of the Octaband® capture children's imagination. It could be a spider, the sun, an octopus, a web – the options are endless! In this activity, the activity leader uses the children's ideas to create pretend scenarios that inspire cooperative movement.

Age: Young Children (Age 3-5 yrs.)

Materials: Octaband®

Targeted Skills:

Creative Self Expression through Movement
Attention
Abstract Thinking
Teamwork

Instructions:

Step 1: Introduce Activity & Set Expectations

Have each child hold one or two Octaband® legs.

Ask them what they think the Octaband® looks like, what they could pretend it could be.

Step 2: Play the Game!

Encourage the group to work together to make the Octaband® move the way the creature or object moves.

The group can try several different ideas or explore more deeply the movements of one creature or object.

Inspire the children to move creatively by narrating what the creature or object is doing. For instance, if the children decide that the Octaband® looks like an octopus, a possible script could include:

How does the octopus move through the water? Look how smooth and slow the motions are. Now the octopus sees something to eat way down low on the ocean floor. Octopus, go down and get that food! Oh, and now the octopus is floating up, up, up to the surface of the water...and back down to the middle of the ocean.

Activity Extensions:

Create a song based on a creature or object and have the children move to the music.
Read a book about the creature or object and have the children move again.

PART 3

Activities for Older Children, Adolescents & Adults

Older children, adolescents and adults find the Octaband® just as engaging as younger children do. The Octaband® can be used with older children through adults for creative movement, yoga, team-building structures, group therapies, and more. As with younger populations, introducing each activity thoughtfully and setting expectations before beginning will help ensure the activity's success. All Octaband® activities should be supervised by the group leader.

ACTIVITY IDEA

Freeze in Shapes

Participants move freely to music, freezing in a shape when the music stops.

Age: Older Elementary School, Adolescent and Adult

Materials: Octaband®; recorded music

Targeted Skills:

Creative Self Expression through Movement

Body Awareness

Self Control

Spatial Awareness

Awareness of Others

Embodiment

Attention

Instructions:

Introduce Activity & Set Expectations:

Each participant holds on to one or two legs of the Octaband®.

Participants are instructed to move freely to music. When the music stops, participants are to “freeze” or stop moving suddenly in a shape.

Step 2: Play the Game!

Encourage participants to explore making various shapes with their bodies and moving on different levels, for example, on the floor, waist-level or up high. When the music stops, they stop moving.

Group leader will vary the duration of the music playing.

Activity Extensions:

Half the group uses the Octaband®, the other half watches. Freeze in a shape when the music stops.

Some children may have difficulty controlling their movements, and therefore freezing. The leader may want to give those children the opportunity to start and stop the music, in effect giving them the opportunity to have control in a different way.

Children can all be still, while one child at a time moves, then freezes in a shape.

ACTIVITY IDEA

Untie the Knot

Participants must work together to untie the knotted Octaband®, without letting go of the handles.

Age: Older Elementary School/Adolescent/Adult

Materials: Octaband®

Targeted Skills:

Team building
Collaboration
Flexibility
Problem-solving
Attention
Spatial Reasoning

Instructions:

Introduce Activity & Set Expectations:

There are a few different ways to tie the Octaband® in a loose knot:

1. The activity leader weaves the legs of the Octaband® into a knot-like configuration, leaving end loops exposed. Leader asks each participant to hold one end of loop.
2. The activity leader lays the Octaband® on the ground in its original shape and asks each participant to hold one handle. One at a time, each participant takes no more than two steps and then makes one additional move. This often leads to a knot.
3. One at a time, have each participant cross the circle, moving under or over an Octaband® leg.

Play the Game:

While holding on to the legs of the Octaband®, participants must work together to undo the knot without letting go of their Octaband® strap. This might involve carefully ducking under or climbing over legs of the Octaband®.

Activity Extensions:

For additional challenge, have participants follow above instructions without speaking.

PART 4

Activities for Older Adults with Disabilities

The Octaband® was originally designed for use with the elderly with physical and cognitive challenges in long term settings. It has proven to be a very effective tool for stimulating cohesive and joyous group movement activities. The elderly tend to love the bright colors and satisfying texture, the loops at the end for grasping, as well as the shape of the Octaband®.

ACTIVITY IDEA

Move to the Music

Participants bounce and stretch the Octaband® as they move in synchrony with the music and each other.

Age: All ages.

Materials: Octaband® and music with a lively, but moderate beat, appropriate for specific age group.

Targeted Skills:

Awareness of Others

Collaboration

Flexibility

Expanded Range of Motion

Attention

Instructions:

Group leader slips her/his hand through the loop at the end of the Octaband® leg. As leader moves around the circle, s/he shakes each participant's hand, slipping the loop from her hand over each participant's wrist. S/he then weaves the strap between participant's thumbs and forefingers, wrapping the strap loosely around the hand, closing participant's thumbs and forefingers over the band. They can easily let go if they like.

Step 1: Introduce Activity & Set Expectations:

- Make small bouncy movements in time to the music.
- Coordinate breath with movement as everyone raises arms up on the in-breath, brings arms down on the out-breath.
- Shake arms to release tension.
- Swing arms from side to side.
- Cross both arms in front and then out to the sides.
- Bring one arm up while bringing the other arm down.
- Lift arm up diagonally across the body, and bring it down. Repeat with the other arm.
- Pull on the arms, bending your elbows, and release, extending your arms.
- Lean your body toward the center, as you grasp the arm, one fist in front of the other.

Once the group is cohesive and you have a good sense of control, and depending upon participants' ability level, you can have participants stand and:

- In a circle, walk to the music clockwise.
- Reverse directions, walking to the music counterclockwise.

- Change the pace of walking.
- Stand still, and repeat the movements done while seated.
- Vary the pace of moving together up and down, sometimes suddenly, sometimes slowly.
- If participants are following instructions and working together as a group, have them move freely while still holding on.
- Experiment with following the impulse of individual group members.

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I am especially grateful to Priscilla Harmel, whose photographs have helped people visually understand the Octaband®. But most of all, I thank my clients whose needs motivated my creation of the Octaband® and in whose honor I donate 10% of the net profits to social science research for Alzheimer's and other dementias.

WARRANTY AND SAFETY INFORMATION

Limited Warranty

Octaband® products are guaranteed against defects in materials and workmanship for one year. No guarantee is made against normal wear from heavy use. We recommend regular inspection of products to guard against injury. Any alteration of products or use of products in a way other than recommended voids all warranties.

Disclaimer

Octaband® products are not toys. They are intended for use with close adult supervision at all times. They are not intended for full body weight and may cause injuries if overstretched. The legs should not be wrapped around a person's neck. The user assumes all risk of injury.