

FOUNDATIONAL FAMILY SERVICES

PARENT WORKSHOP: *SENSORY PROCESSING AND REGULATION*

A Short Overview of Sensory Processing and Regulation Information Page

What is Sensory Processing?

- Our ability to process information as it comes in from our senses and respond appropriately to that information.

Over-responsive vs. Under-responsive

- Over-responders (little cup) are sensitive/over-react to sensory stimuli; under-responders (big cup) require more of the sensory stimuli to fully process the information. Each sense can have a different response type.

Sensory Components:

- **Tactile:** helps us understand information about touch and provides information about the environment and object qualities such as touch, pressure, texture, hard, sharp, soft, dull, temperature, pain, etc.
- **Vestibular:** help us understand information about movement and balance, and provides information about where our body is in space, speed, and direction of movement.
- **Proprioception:** helps us understand what our body parts are doing and provides information about where the body part is and how it is moving for coordination and motor planning.
- **Visual:** helps us understand what we are seeing and provides information about objects and persons such as how far away are they, what size are they, what other features do they have (e.g., colour, shape, etc.). This system is highly linked with vestibular and proprioception.
- **Auditory:** helps us understand what we are hearing and provides information about tone, volume, pitch, direction of sound, and can alert the body of danger.
- **Gustatory:** helps us understand taste and provides information about different types of tastes such as sweet, sour, bitter, salty, spicy, umami.
- **Olfactory:** helps us understand smell and provides information about different types of smell such as musty, acrid, putrid, flowery, pungent, and will alert the body if something smells dangerous (e.g., rotten).

What is Self-Regulation?

- The ability of the nervous system to maintain and/or change arousal (energy) levels of the body appropriately in response to certain tasks or situations.

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Sensory Strategies:

General Calming:

- Calm voice/co-regulation
- Slow rhythmic movement
- Simplify environment
- Heavy work – carrying, pushing, pulling
- Simplify instructions
- Provide warnings for transitions and change (e.g., visual schedules)
- Follow routine
- Provide access to breaks
- Give choice when possible
- Deep breathing (Free apps such as: Headspace for Kids; Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame; Stop, Breathe & Think Kids)

Calming Tactile:

- Deep pressure
- Warmth
- Slow vibration
- Stroking push toy or blanket
- Fidget tools

Calming Oral/Auditory:

- Chewy tubes or chewelry
- Chewing gum or crunchy/chewy snacks
- Noise reduction/canceling headphones
- Soft, rhythmic music, certain classical and folk selections

Setting up a Sensory-Smart Environment:

- Provide opportunities for movement
 - Push/pull/lift activities
 - Movement and music
 - Moving while sitting
- Provide sensory breaks
 - Quiet corner (e.g., bean bag, quiet activities)
- Visual supports (first-then, timers, schedules)
- Offer creative ways to decrease stimulation for the sensitive child
 - Gloves or utensils for messy play, umbrella or rain hat for sprinkler play, blanket over the sand for sand play, etc).
- Offer creative and safe ways to increase stimulation for the seeking child
 - Opportunities to get messy, make noise, move, push, pull, lift, touch, etc.

Smith Myles, Cook, Miller,
Rinner, Robbins, 2000.

Helpful Links:

- <https://grandviewkids.ca/whats-the-deal-with-heavy-work/>
- <https://grandviewkids.ca/ssah-eligible-expenses/>