

Sensory Processing

Sensory Support in Schools



Touch

Activities to promote a well working somatosensory system:

- Brushing over the skin with different textures/feathers.
- Creative wall with different surfaces – sandpaper, wool, cotton, dried peas etc.
- Messy play - Playing with playdough, mud, clay, water, shaving foam, glitter glue, finger paint and sand.
- Rolling over grass, snow, sand, carpet.
- Drink carbonated water to experience bubbles in the mouth
- Dress up and role play to get used to the feel of unfamiliar textiles.
- Frozen foods (popsicles, frozen veg) and mixed temperature food (hot fudge sundae).
- Walk barefoot in the grass, sand, dirt – dig and play in the garden.
- Tactile hobbies – sculpt, sew, weave, crochet, knit, scrapbook work with pasting glue, sandpaper to do woodwork projects.
- Make things out of clay and try a potter's wheel.

Auditory

Calming and organising auditory input:

- Go outside and listen (listen to rain, thunder, wind, listen for bird song and try to identify direction).
- Listen to natural sound recordings.
- Play a listening game (try and identify sounds and where they are coming from).
- Find calming, focused music (music engineered to promote calm and focus, energy or creativity) – play in the classroom.
- Consider headphones.
- Create pleasant sound – white noise, water fountain/aquarium.
- Encourage learning an instrument.
- Give some control – turn on the radio, pop the balloon, **anticipate the noise**. Try CD's that desensitise sounds that children find distressing.

Visual

Simplify the visual field for a calming and organising effect:

Avoid excess visuals and reduce visual clutter

- Hide clutter in bins/behind closed doors.
- Hang curtains over bookshelves.
- Use solid colour rugs rather than patterns.
- Solid colour walls.

Consider seating plans, possible suggestions

- Sit at the front of the class to avoid distractions/the back of the class if a child is hypervigilant (so they can monitor and feel safe).
- Sit away from the windows to avoid distraction.

Smell (Olfactory)

Stimulating the olfactory system:

- Smell different scents and find a scent that is calming and enjoyed by the young person. Use this scent in a calm box, on a hanky, build positive explicit memory around the smell.
- Vanilla and rose scents are generally calming.
- Peppermint and citrus are usually alerting.
- Plan **scent breaks**.
- Walk through sensory gardens, **build** (proprioceptive input) your own sensory garden.

Taste

Stimulating the sense of taste (closely linked to smell):

- Involve in food preparation.
- Play with food - 'rocks and trees' are more appealing to picky eaters than meatballs and broccoli! Encourage children to try something new each week. Play taste games.
- Have breaks for drinks (use a straw) to soothe and regulate.

Vestibular System

Activities to bring online the vestibular system:

- Swinging, rolling and spinning.
- Doing activity lying on your stomach holding your head up (prone position).
- Active movements - jumping, hopscotch, rolling down a slope.
- Playground swings, front to back, side to side.
- Hang upside down from play equipment (with crash mats).
- For older children – swing in a hammock, merry go round, cartwheels, dance and swimming are good for vestibular input.
- Balance board – catching and throwing activities.
- Games that involve stopping and starting.

Proprioceptive System

Activities to support proprioception:

- Deep pressure activities. Make a cushion sandwich or roll in a blanket.
- Tug of war (sitting or kneeling).
- Theraband exercises.
- Hanging from a pull up bar/trapeze/monkey bars/climbing ropes.
- Wear a backpack with toys/snacks/drink bottle etc. to add weight.
- Class/school jobs – heavy lifting.
- Digging, pushing a wheelbarrow etc. GARDENING.
- Chair/wall push ups.
- Riding and propelling vehicles.
- Body moves – commando crawl/crab walk/yoga positions e.g. downward dog.
- Swimming/rock climbing/martial arts.