

Sensory Strategies

Here is some information on the senses and some sensory strategies which may help in self-regulation.

Sight

(light, darkness, colour, movement)- Our sense of vision is our ability to perceive wavelengths of visible light.

Strategies

- Lighting: Use lamp light for reducing visual input or overhead fluorescent light for increased visual stimulation. Dimmer switches in overhead lighting mean you can reduce or increase light as needed
- Visual clutter: Reduce or eliminate visual clutter for reduced sensory input
- Wall colour: Paint calming colours on walls such as blue or neutral colours, and for increased alertness, orange or red
- Room accessories: Use patterned rugs or curtains for stimulation, or more neutral and solid colours reduce sensory input
- Work/ study space: work in an open space with movement for alertness, or have a partition or desk divider to eliminate visual distractions, for a more calm and focused setting
- Computer use: take eye rest breaks when exposed to excessive amounts of computer light. Consider a computer glare screen, blue blocking glasses, or coloured screen filters to block computer lighting, and decrease visual input



I have a cool effect on my glasses where they react and go grey in the sun and in bright places. I also turn the brightness down on my tech devices, which sounds really simple, but it helps reduce my sensory related headaches, after using them for a long time.

Hearing

(sound, pitch, volume of noise)- Hearing is our perception of sound, which is detected as vibrations within the ears.

Strategies

- Music: depending on the type of music, music can be alerting or calming
- Various noises: white noise, running water, fan or other devices that hum can help provide a constant predictable sound which can be soothing for some people. Alternatively they can cause distress to other people
- Noise reducing or cancelling devices: Earbuds or ear plugs can help block out some noise and noise-cancelling headphones can block out as much noise as possible
- Nature sounds, outside or as a recording, can be soothing for some people



I like to have loud music on headphones, or have background noise of TV shows i know inside out, so I'm not required to watch it,, but i still get the story.

Touch

Our sense of touch is located around receptors in the skin. These receptors sense varying amounts of pressure on the skin - from gentle brushing to firm pressing. They can also sense the duration and location of the touch.

Strategies

- Dry brushing your skin or applying body-cream or massaging arms and legs can be soothing
- Stroking a pet or textured clothing, playing with fidget toys such as fidget spinners or textured balls
- For reduced sensory touch ensure people understand the need for personal space, wear tight fitting, seamless soft and label free clothing



I use soft blankets, a polar bear cuddle pillow for bed, change my clothing if sensory issues are going on (can vary depending on with overwhelm) and use a tumble dryer - needed to make things soft

Smell

Our sense of smell works closely with our sense of taste. Chemicals and minerals from food, or ones just floating in the air, are perceived by the olfactory receptors in our nose that send signals to the brain.

Strategies

- Deep breathing through the nose
- Trying different creams or essential oils can be helpful such as lavender or chamomile for relaxation or citrus or peppermint for alertness
- Identifying and avoiding certain smells can be helpful for some people such as air fresheners, fabric softeners or certain cooking smells



I use Vicks stick and/or sinus spray, nice home diffusers.

Taste

The taste buds on our tongue give information on the taste of food as well as if the food contains minerals or dangerous substances, such as poison. In addition the texture and temperature of food as well as the movement within the mouth provides sensory input.

Strategies

- To increase sensory input and levels of alertness you could try eating something crunchy, sour, sweet, spicy, salty, chewy or cold or sucking through a straw
- For a calming affect soft and/or mild flavoured food such as cottage cheese, avocado, porridge or white bread. Also warm food such as tea, hot chocolate or soup

Vestibular

The vestibular sense gives information related to balance and spatial orientation and helps with coordinating movement with balance.

Strategies

- To help regulate you can try the following activities yoga, rocking back and forth, spinning, sitting on an exercise ball, stretch breaks, dancing or a brisk walk

Proprioception

Our proprioceptive sense helps us to identify our body position in space, location of our limbs and body without looking. It helps with coordination skills and tells us how much force to use when we're holding, pushing, pulling, or lifting objects.

Strategies

- To help regulate you can try the following activities yoga poses, push-ups, breathing exercises, squeezing arms and legs, weighted lap pad or weighted blanket, gardening, mowing the lawn, running, self-hugging or massage, resistance band exercises

Interoception

Our interoception helps us to understand and feel what's going on inside our bodies e.g. when we are hungry, thirsty, need the toilet as well as our feelings.

Strategies

Interoception strategies involve understanding and feeling what is going on inside of the body. Understanding how the body feels and how it reacts to certain sensory strategies can help to identify what is alerting and calming for you. Things that might help include,

- Deep breathing
- Mindfulness activities
- Yoga
- Body labeling- Noticing how your body feels during activities
- Think about how your body feels and how this might be related to an emotion