

## Auditory

### Calming

- Provide a quiet corner in the room (classroom/home), this allows a quiet space for the child to calm down, reorganise and refocus. If the room is large enough, furnish a reading corner with a beanbag, chair, pillow and a soft fabric sheet.
- Play soft music or set a metronome to a slow rhythm to calm the child
- Use a soft voice and slow down your movements and speech when speaking to the child
- Instruct everybody in class to talk in a whisper for 5 minutes
- Limit, forewarn or prepare the child for loud noises when and where possible.

### Alerting

- Give a cue to gain the child's attention prior to giving instructions, stand in front of the child, clap, use a bell, blow a whistle, but not to startle.
- Make sure the child is making eye contact and their hands are free of objects
- Encourage the child to repeat instruction and explanations to him or herself after they have been presented to the class
- Have the child act as a classroom messenger

## Visual

### Calming

- Reduce visual distractions: remove decorations near the child desk and between the child and the white board. This includes things hanging from ceilings or walls.
- Position the child in the front row close to the white board; enables a clear view and helps the child to identify the direction and orientation of information on the board. Avoid the child sitting side on or with their back to the information being presented.
- Place a corral around the child's working area to block out visual distractions. Use a frame or window to cover all material except that which is to be copied or read.
- Consider the intensity of lighting in the classroom, low light will help this child to feel calm and focused, or allow the child to wear a hat inside as a form of eyeshade, light coloured sunglasses could be considered for classroom work.

### Alerting

- Bright light will help this child stay alert; this can be done by sitting the child near the window or fluorescent light.
- Provide strong contrasts between work materials and working surface. Use a coloured mat, brightly coloured rectangle of paper or rectangle of textured material under work materials.
- Provide the child with checklists in the front of exercise books. Include checklists for spellings, writing (punctuation, word spaces etc) and page presentation. Checklists can help remind the child to self-evaluate, notice and correct all work.
- Use strong visual cues to draw the child's attention to key aspects of words, phrases or visual images. This can be done by highlighting, outlining, using stickers or drawing arrows. Use neon or red markers to darken outlines for activities with line boundaries, such as colouring, maze or scissor cutting activities.

## Vestibular

### Calming

- Place a rocking chair in the quiet area and allow the child to slowly rock in the rocking chair. Slowing rocking has a calming effect on the nervous system.
- Encourage activities that the child can **self-direct**. Allow the child to have control over the degree of movement (strength and duration) of an activity involving moving through space, e.g. if frightened by being on a swing, get the child to lay over the swing seat so that their feet can touch the ground for propulsion.
- Move the child in a way that is tolerated; gentle back and forth movement (is the most calming), up and down movement are more stimulating, as are side to side movements. Gradually increase speed and size of movement. Eventually introduce rotary movements (the most stimulating).

### Alerting

- Any fast movements that involve a: start/stop or angular movements of the head. Such as: jumping off objects, running and jumping into a large bean bag, running..... stopping..... running again games or being on a swing.

Avoid fast movements before the child is required to concentrate. Movement activities for a child sensitive to vestibular input are important for this child to engage in. However consider the times that these activities are performed. The vestibular system has a fairly immediate effect on the nervous system, and movement activities will arouse this child and it will take time to settle.

- Perform wake up activities that include jumping up and down on the spot, running around, shaking head and body.
- Encourage frequent changes in positions during work that facilitates changes in head position; for example alternate between sitting and lying on stomach. Allow the child to get up and move around during the activity or ask them to run errands throughout the day.

- Limit the length of time that the child is expected to sit still in one position; intersperse sitting activities with physical activities. Physical activities can make sitting at a desk or sitting for assembly, much easier.

## Proprioceptive

### Calming

- Apply **firm steady** touch pressure to: shoulders, shoulders to elbows, elbows to palms, hips, hips to knees, knees to feet. Child could give themselves a big bear hug by wrapping their right hand around their left shoulder, and their left hand around their right shoulder and squeezing.
- The child may enjoy carrying heavy objects: large milk containers filled with water or sand (use cooled boiled water and superglue lid on). These could be numbered or have letters of the alphabet on them, so games could be played while the child's joint/ligaments/muscles experience calming deep proprioceptive input.
- Involve the child to: unload grocery's, help carry the washing basket with wet washing, wear a back pack with some heavy books in (no more than 10% of their body weight), push furniture around the room; digging in wet sand, filling bucket, carrying bucket, crawling through tunnels.
- The child may enjoy having a heavy blanket around their shoulders.

### Alerting

- All the above calming activities but the firm steady pressure is altered to be intermittent: on off on off on off type.

## Tactile

### Calming

- When first introducing tactile sensations provide heavy, deep pressure on the skin that is being touched. Use firm, sustained pressure contact whenever you need to touch the child. Avoid light touch as this will be an irritation to the child.
- Help prepare the child for any activity that may involve touch. Provide a verbal instruction...wait...if ok with child/teenager then continue. Allowing this time and consent from the child helps them to tolerate the touch activity.

Avoid approaching from behind and touching the child, as this will startle the child and make them feel uneasy.

Experiment with the child's desk in the class room, a position that is away from the main thoroughfare in an area of little traffic will prevent the child being accidentally bumped. Avoid desks that touch each other as this can create unpredictable touch and movement. Ensure there is a gap between desks.

Allow the child to choose where to sit/stand. During floor sitting activities or assembly allow the child to sit towards the side of the group as opposed to the centre, where the child would be surrounded by other children. Allow the child to stand at the beginning of the line

### Alerting

- Play wake up activities that have a strong tactile focus. This could include standing in a circle and patting rhythms on each other's backs, clapping and jumping songs, body slapping songs. Use random, light, brisk touch is stimulating or alerting.
- Provide a wide variety of touch sensations and tactile experiences in the classroom. Large sweet jars filled with objects that re soft/hard, fluffy/coarse, warm/ cool, smooth/rough. Raw pasta/sand/small pebbles/cotton

wool/shredded paper for example. Items can be hidden in the jars for the child to search for.

- Provide a variety of tactile experiences. Introduce games and activities that enable tactile input to the child such as; brushing of the body with different textures, rolling blindfolded on a textured mat and describing the texture, dress up, body painting with think brushes and pretend paint.
- A tactile object held in the child's hand can satisfy their need to touch everything, a Koosh ball (rubber pompom) or a small furry toy; a necklace can provide an adequate object to fiddle with.

## Olfactory (smell), Gustatory (taste)

### Calming

- Burn oils, use soaps that have a relaxing tendency for example: lavender, vanilla or rose.
- Apply firm deep pressure around the mouth before: meal time/washing face/brushing teeth. Will help desensitise the area. Sing a song "this is the way we squash our face, squash our face, squash our face, (repeat) ...ready for dinner time.
- Cook: pasta/carrots/broccoli, al dente, this gives the food a slight resistance when being chewed. This resistance provides calming sensory input. Similar to deep pressure touch.

### Alerting

- Encourage the child to explore tastes and smells. Provide a wide variety of smell/taste sensations and experiences. Blindfold the child and have the child guess what food has been tasted/smelled.
- Increase the child's alertness level by using smells and tastes that are distinctive: lemon, strong mint, sweet/sour sweets.
- Provide a variety of experiences that involve light brisk touch around the mouth. Face painting using either face paint or pretend face paint (water).
- Frozen: lolly pops, fruit or peas are alerting and stimulating.

#### *Reference:*

*Department of Health and Community Services, Northern Territory Government. (2006). Learning Through The Senses Resource Manual; The Impact of Sensory Processing in the Classroom. Harcourt Assessment Inc, ISBN 076-1602-28-3*