

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY INFO. SHEET

Sensory Seeking

Some learners can crave more sensory input than others, and their constant need to gain ('seek') more sensory input can affect their ability to concentrate, listen, engage in activities, and have appropriate self-control.

Sensory seeking can look like: a constant need to touch objects, surfaces, textures and people around them; being hyperactive & impulsive; putting non-food items in their mouths and frequently wanting to chew things; loving loud noises, having a need to talk loudly or create a lot of noise; being constantly 'on the go' and struggling to sit still; jumping, spinning, climbing, and / or bumping into things; being fascinated / heavily focused on patterns, spinning items, moving items, and / or certain colours & shapes; and frequent smelling / sniffing things.

If you are able to identify the types of sensation your child may be seeking, activity ideas to increase different types of sensory input are listed below:

Visual activities:

- Provide spinning items, flashing toys, torches & mirrors etc
- Try Apps such as 'Sensory Electra' and 'Sensory Magma' for visually stimulating screen play

Auditory (noise) activities:

- Provide opportunity to listen to preferred music / theme tunes / household sounds (provide on a device with headphones if they prefer a louder volume that is too much for other members of the household)
- Be mindful that humming, repeating phrases, and vocalising (including shouting & crying) can be a child seeking sound and therefore creating it themselves, but that it can also be an attempt to control auditory input and block out environmental noise around them that may be too much to process or too loud

Oral activities:

- Use an appropriate oral chew (if available)
- Try crunchy / chewy snacks to provide similar sensory input e.g. carrot sticks, strawberry laces, breadsticks, different cereals

Movement activities:

- Press-ups, wall push-ups, chair push-ups
- Bounce on a gym ball or wobble on a pile of cushions / pillows
- Follow online exercise programmes e.g. The Body Coach or use a Wii Fit <https://www.youtube.com/user/thebodycoach1/search?query=kids>
- Carry out movements and stretches in front of a mirror, for added visual input and improved body awareness in addition to the movement itself
- Use cans of food or toys as weights
- Set up an indoor obstacle course
- Help with cleaning: sweeping, mopping and wiping surfaces are all great forms of proprioceptive input

Tactile Seeking (Touch) activities:

- Play-doh, Arts & Crafts (painting, finger knitting, scrap-booking, tearing paper, making salt dough etc)
- Tactile Adventure Bins (hide toys or jigsaw pieces in porridge, sand, lentils, rice, popcorn etc to retrieve)
- Treasure Hunts (hide small objects in playdoh or adventure bin to find with fingers)
- Shaving Foam & Bubbles (draw in them, blow them & pop with fingers / hands)
- Kitchen Activities (mixing, measuring, tasting, smelling, washing up)
- Extra baths / showers (bubbles, soap, sponges, flannels and brushes)