

## Sensory diet (sensory experience plan)

It is an action plan to give a child the sensory experience they may need. Suitable sensory experience provided in supportive settings and predictable routines can help children regulate emotions, prevent overstimulation, and become calm. For children who tend to be under-stimulated, regular sensory stimulation may energise them and make them alert.

### Some guiding principles:

- The child should like the sensory experience; it should not be distressing for the child.
- It should combine a variety of experiences.
- It should be easily accessible to the child at school and home.
- At least in the early stages of introducing the sensory experience, the child should be monitored and supported.
- The sensory experience plan should be regularly reviewed, and if something isn't working, it should be stopped or replaced.

## Types of sensory experiences

### Tactile

- Playing with beans or pebbles
- Playing with slime, playdough, or clay
- Colouring with hands
- walking bare feet on a rough surface
- squeezing a rough softball
- Making sandcastles
- holding a vibrating toy in hands
- massage

### Movement and proprioception

- Jumping running spinning
- Swinging
- Dancing
- hula hoop
- Skipping rope
- Playing catch a ball
- pushing a wheelbarrow
- Lying under cushions

### Oral

- Blowing a cotton ball
- eating crunchy food
- making animal sounds
- blowing up balloons
- puffing cheeks with air
- painting while holding the brush in the mouth
- licking a sticky sauce off lips

### Visual

- matching games

- pattern activity
- puzzles
- colourful bubbles

#### Smell

- scented oils
- perfumes
- scented sticks

#### Sound

- sing songs
- play musical instruments
- noise blocking earmuffs
- listen to calming music

### Some examples of the sensory experience plan

#### #1: A 7-year-old boy with autism and hyperactivity

Starting at a convenient time in the morning, plan for giving the child the experience of one of the following activities for 10 to 30 minutes, one every two hours or so:

- jumping on the trampoline or skipping rope
- blowing up balloons
- lying down under a weighted blanket
- eating some crunchy carrots
- listening to calming music while watching colourful bubbles in the room with incense sticks.

#### #2: A four-year-old girl who is under stimulated:

Starting at a convenient time in the morning, plan for giving the child the experience of one of the following activities for 10 to 30 minutes, every two hours or so:

- a massage of her arms and legs with pressure
- completing a puzzle
- going on a swing or a merry go round
- rolling on her tummy
- using a vibrating toothbrush
- lying down under a weighted blanket

#### #3: a 13-year-old boy with anxiety, poor emotional regulation and difficult behaviour

Starting at a convenient time in the morning, plan for giving the child the experience of one of the following activities for 10 to 30 minutes, one every two hours or so:

- Using noise reducing earmuffs or noise cancelling earphones when doing drawing or any other preferred activity
- Playing catching a ball or juggling some balls for 10 minutes
- running for 20 minutes
- Skip rope for 10 minutes
- breathing exercises for 10 minutes
- yoga for 15 minutes