

## Sensory Ideas

Here are some reminders and ideas to consider when thinking about addressing the sensory needs of your child over the summer. Every child is different in terms of sensory needs, and sensory needs can change, sometimes within a short period of time. Many children's sensory needs are clear. Watch to see what activities your child seeks frequently, such as climbing under lots of blankets or pillows, staring at fans, or swinging. Your child may also refuse certain activities such as getting his/her hands dirty. Sometimes just watching your child play can give you a lot of information about what activities they prefer.

### Visual Ideas

#### Reducing Visual Stimuli:

- Organize and label all material to identify where they belong.
- Put pictures on containers for children with poor visual memory.
- Use picture templates of where items belong in places (i.e. desk, room).
- Use a number or letter line.
- Provide primary lined paper or graph paper to help with spacing.
- Use a lamp instead of overhead fluorescent lighting.
- Use a touch screen instead of computer mouse.

#### Providing Visual Stimuli:

- Buy lava lamps, or other cool visual toys, for your child's bedroom.
- Make a mobile you can hang from the ceiling or window frame that glitters.
- Use visuals as much as possible to provide information (schedule, calendar, rules).

### Auditory Ideas

#### Reducing Auditory Stimuli:

- Minimize verbal directions.
- Use ear plugs or head phones.
- Use social stories about what might happen or sounds that can be heard in the room.
- Desensitize a child to an area by slowly integrating him or her on numerous visits.

#### Providing Auditory Stimuli:

- Allow time for child to listen to favorite music (i.e. classical, Dixie).
- Make homemade musical instruments and have a band!

### Tactile Ideas

#### Reducing Tactile Stimuli:

- When a child says a touch "hurts" or pulls away, acknowledge their pain and stop touching.
- Experiment with types of clothing that are comfortable (i.e. terry cloth, all cotton, several times washed, no labels).
- Refer to occupational therapist for further ideas (i.e. weighted vest, utensils, "brushing").
- Allow child to wash hands after painting or gluing.

- Put messy materials in plastic Ziploc bag.

#### Providing Tactile Stimuli:

- Provide easy access to small hand fidgets (i.e. squishy, soft, textured, soft).
- Allow child to sit in a bean bag chair.
- Make homemade playdough.
- Experience with "unpaint" (other materials like pudding, shaving cream, mud, etc.)

#### **Taste Ideas**

- When rewarding child with food or cooking time, use food they already like.
- Keep all poisonous substances locked up safely.
- Reward child for trying new foods.

#### **Smells Ideas**

- Be aware that if you have a scented object, the child may act adversely to that particular smell.
- Use minimal amounts of perfume or cologne.
- Be aware of soaps or detergents use - Use scent free laundry products.
- Have a scented lamp, candle, lotions, liquid soap, scented markers or stickers available to smell to calm child.
- Use small film containers to hold items with strong odors (poke small hole in top).

#### **Proprioceptive Ideas**

- Engage child in up and down movements (i.e. jumping rope, bouncing a ball, trampoline) to wake up child.
- Back and forth movements (i.e. swinging, sitting in rocking chair) may help calm child.
- Use stress balls, theraputty and fidget toys.
- Allow chewing on crunchy, chewy items (i.e. bubble gum in freezer, licorice sticks, pretzels, carrots).
- Designate an area in the room to stomp feet or pace.
- Buy a yard of t-shirt fabric (tube) for your child to climb through.

#### **Vestibular Ideas**

- Create heavy work activities (e.g. take down chairs in computer lab, take garbage out at lunch, take a pile of encyclopedia to library).
- Have child sit on wobble cushion or ball.
- Allow frequent breaks throughout the day.
- Have child jump on trampoline.
- Play games using repetitive alternating and rhythmic movement.
- Play on merry go round, ride roller coasters, hang upside down, play team sports, swim, twist chains of a swing and untwisting, go sledding, slide down water slides.

Adapted from: <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/Sensory/sensoryIntegrate.html> (entire article on website)

A must have book: [The Out-of Sync Child Has Fun](#) by Carol Stock Kranowitz (see attached activities)