



Humber Sensory Processing Service

Community Services for Children
aged 0-18 years



Using Sensory Strategies

Managing sensory differences and finding effective support strategies for yourself or your child can feel overwhelming at first. This resource offers practical ideas to help you begin incorporating regulation strategies as part of a daily routine. This guide can be used alongside our other resources, which include lots of sensory strategies to try at home, school, and in other environments.



Key tips for using strategies effectively

It is important to remember that **everyone is different** and what works well for one person, may not work for another.

It can be tricky to know where to start with sensory strategies. **Observing** your child and the activities they naturally gravitate toward can **give clues about the types of sensory input they enjoy and what feels good to them and their bodies**. For example, if they love climbing or jumping, they may be seeking proprioceptive input; if they like squeezing into small spaces or asking for tight hugs, they may enjoy deep pressure. Once you have an idea of the sensations they prefer, you can explore strategy ideas in the resources section on the website.

Sensory strategies tend to be more **effective when they're built into a regular routine**. You might notice some change when you try a strategy once but using it consistently as part of the day adds predictability. This sense of routine can help you or your child feel safer and more comfortable when using the strategy. Over time, repeating the activity also helps build confidence and provides opportunity to practice, which may support long-term self-regulation (our resource on co-regulation may also have some useful ideas).

Try to implement strategies in way, which is **proactive and not reactive**. When strategies are embedded throughout the day, then they can 'top up' our levels of regulation and help to prevent overwhelm. Once the body is in a state of stress—like fight, flight, or freeze—it becomes much harder to use calming strategies effectively. That's why it's important to build them in before signs of distress appear.

It's really important that the **strategies being used feel enjoyable**. Try leaning into existing interests or hobbies so regulation activities don't feel like extra work. Strategies can often be blended into everyday routines or activities, for example, if gaming or watching TV is a favourite activity, sitting on a therapy ball during screen time can be a simple way to support regulation. And if a strategy doesn't feel good, don't force



it, instead focus on finding “feel-good strategies” that are fun and easy to look forward to.

It is not always helpful to tell someone that they *have* to complete strategies; this can sometimes make them less willing to join in. Instead, try **turning it into a game or a challenge**. For example, rather than requesting that someone rolls on a therapy ball, challenge them to collect objects whilst they roll on their tummy on the therapy ball, this can turn the activity into a fun mission! Instead of asking for “10 jumps,” make it a challenge: “Can you jump to the moon?” or “Can you get enough power to launch your rocket ship?”. These kinds of playful ideas can reduce the demand of completing strategies and can make them feel more fun.

Having purpose to a strategy can be helpful for some people, such as turning movement breaks into jobs; adding in carrying, pushing or pulling items can be even more targeted, for example helping carrying shopping bags in, or pushing a wheelbarrow in the garden.

Some people like to **understand why sensory strategies are regulating** or which sensory systems an activity supports. They may find it helpful to explore the information on the website about the eight sensory systems. For example, you might explain, “We’re going to the park to play on the swings, this helps your vestibular sense”.

Sometimes a strategy may only work for a short time because it’s new and exciting. It can be helpful to **build a “bank” of strategy ideas** to try and rotate (our website resources are a great place to start). Keep in mind that some strategies may work well when someone is younger but feel less appealing as they get older. **It’s perfectly okay to change things** up so the strategies continue to be effective and enjoyable.

When introducing strategies, try to **use clear language and communication**. Keep in mind that trying something new can feel intimidating for some people, and they may need extra support and practice to get feel safe and become comfortable with a strategy.



Equipment

Sensory equipment can be helpful in supporting regulation; however, it is not an essential. Many helpful strategies can be done with everyday items may already have at home. Lots of activities don't require any equipment at all. Look at our other resources for more equipment and strategy ideas.

Some key pieces of equipment are:

- Therapy ball
- Spiky massage ball
- Chewellery
- Vibrating bug
- Body sock
- Resistance bands
- Music and headphones
- Weighted blanket

Lending Libraries

Lots of charities now offer sensory libraries, so you can borrow equipment to try before you consider buying it.

For more advice and strategies like this, you can visit our website:
www.connect.humber.nhs.uk/service/humber-sensory-processing-hub/home/

Or you can contact us with a question on the email address below:
hnf-tr.humbersensoryprocessingservice@nhs.net

