



Sensory Modulation & Mental Health

Everyone has their own sensory difficulties, nobody has the perfect sensory system; the important question is whether they interfere with our daily routine and engagement in functional tasks.

Sensory experiences include touch, taste, balance & movement (vestibular), proprioception (body awareness), sight, hearing, and smell.

Sensory Modulation is a person's ability to regulate and organise behavioural responses to sensory input in a way that allows us to function in our daily lives. Pay attention to the "relevant" while shutting out "irrelevant" stimuli.

For example, ignoring the sounds of the radio while focusing on the sounds of the TV.

A difficulty with screening incoming sensory information is often referred to as **sensory modulation**.

Below there are some sensory strategies which may be useful in supporting an individual to continue to engage in activity. For some it may be as simple as scheduling quiet time or providing a quiet space. Each individual's sensory pattern is unique and it is important to note that not all of these suggestions will work with everyone.



<p><u>Somatosensory</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Theraputty Playdoh ❖ Brushing/Joint Compression ❖ Squeeze/Stress balls ❖ Brushes 	<p><u>Vestibular</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Wheelchair swing ❖ Swing ❖ Wobble boards ❖ Rocking horse/chair 	<p><u>Deep Pressure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Weighted blanket ❖ Weighted ❖ Weighted vests ❖ Ankle weights ❖ Weighted ball
<p><u>Proprioceptive</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Waterbed ❖ Theraband ❖ Bear hug Vest ❖ Move-n-sit cushion ❖ Resistance sac <p><u>Olfactory</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Aroma Squeeze Me Dough ❖ Smelly pens ❖ Smelly scent cards ❖ Body lotion ❖ Essential oils 	<p><u>Linear Vestibular & Proprioceptive</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Glider ❖ Trampoline ❖ Peanut Ball ❖ Scooter board ❖ Swings ❖ 'Row row' with vibration tube ❖ Wheelbarrow 	<p><u>Tactile</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Programmes for ADL's ❖ Vibration cushion ❖ Vibration tube ❖ MOHO blanket ❖ Feel bag ❖ Messy play: rice/lentils/shaving foam/finger painting ❖ Tactile tiles / auto turf (tactile board)/ selection of tactile balls/ selection of fidgets/ rubbing stones
<p><u>Oral</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Oral facial massage ❖ Chewy tube ❖ Z – Vibe ❖ Chewy/crunchy foods ❖ Bubbles ❖ Blow pens ❖ Straws and pom poms ❖ Windmills/ party blowers ❖ Sports bottles 	<p><u>Visual</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Mirror ❖ Parachute (P & V) ❖ Disco ball/ Lamp ❖ Lava lamp (quick heat up) ❖ Raintube (auditory) ❖ Snow globe (prop) ❖ Mindfulness colouring (prop & kines) 	<p><u>Auditory</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Windchimes ❖ Sound-out earphones/noise reduction ❖ Music of preference ❖ Skoog ❖ Auditory books ❖ Cause & effect toys/ instruments



Sensory box: A sensory box is a box that contains a variety of different textures that she can explore in the box. For example:

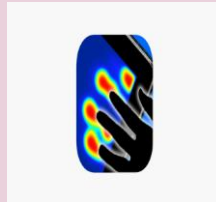
- Rough- sand paper, Hard- marbles, Different types of fabric velvet and silk, Spongy, Fluffy, Cotton balls, Pine cone, Shells, Bubble wrap, Feather, Fake snow, Tinsel, Fill small containers with sand/kinetic sand and/or rice
- The individual may enjoy making this box themselves. The individual could be encouraged to guess what they are feeling or determine what textures they likes/dislikes.

Apps:

Fluidity



Heatpad



Fireworks





Strategies for wiggly or restless behaviour

Heavy work or tasks that involve heavy resistance and input to the muscles and joints is essential to regulating proprioception. Proprioceptive input can be very calming for those who are easily overwhelmed by sensory stimulation

Activities: Push, pull, stretch, crawl, or move objects with resistance or weight.

- Weight bearing activities such as running (especially on surfaces such as sand, grass as this provides more resistance).
- Carrying bottles of water in from the car.
- On walks place a bag on individuals shoulders and place one or two books into their bag to provide deep pressure to their shoulders.
- Sweeping the floor
- Vertical work such as drawing on easel board, wiping the windows
- Pushing a heavy shopping trolley, carrying shopping bags

Benefits: Provides proprioceptive input to the muscles and joints.

Outcome: Helps children regulate their behaviour and focus more easily.

Other useful Materials: All from Thinking Toys Website

Sensyball Large
(28cm)



Weighted
Dolphin:
2kg



Heavy
Med Ball
3kg:
17cm



BodySock :Medium

<https://harkla.co/blogs/special-needs/10-awesome-sensory-body-sock-ideas>





Strategies for Tense or Tired Behaviour

Activities: Massage or apply gentle vibration to the back, shoulders, arms and legs. Use vibrating pens to give increased feedback to hands to improve grip and create awareness in hands.

- A bear hug can be calming and relaxing. Try and encourage them to give themselves a tight hug
- Deep pressure massage on arms, legs and back. Use deep, firm pressure in a downward motion as opposed to light, sporadic movements. A sponge, body brush or even your hands will all work for this.

Benefits: Provides deep pressure and joint compression which is relaxing and calming.

Outcome: Helps relieve stress, re-energize and focus.

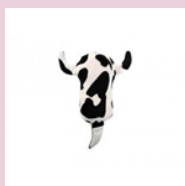
Materials: All from Thinking Toys Website

Arks Tranquil



Vibrating Pen

Lil Cow:
Handheld
Vibrating
Massage



Vibrating Bug



Vibrating
Massage Tube





Quick movements can improve attention: No materials required

- ❖ Jumping jacks
- ❖ Wall push ups
- ❖ Running on the spot
- ❖ Chair pushups

Calm down jars



You will need: Plastic bottle, strong glue, glitter, glitter glue, water, and jewels.

Method:

- ❖ Fill plastic bottle $\frac{3}{4}$ full with water.
- ❖ Add glitter glue, glitter & jewels.
- ❖ Fill to the top with water.
- ❖ Glue lid shut.
- ❖ Shake & enjoy!

Aromatherapy

- ❖ Essential oils should never be used undiluted on the skin
- ❖ Always perform a patch test before applying to the skin
- ❖ People with allergies must be cautious with essential oils. The least sensitive skin area is the soles of the feet
- ❖ Do not add undiluted directly to bathwater
- ❖ Exercise caution in using oils when any medical condition is present

Essential Oils for Stress Reduction: [Bergamot](#), [Clary Sage](#), [Frankincense](#), [Geranium](#), [Grapefruit](#), [Jasmine](#), [Lavender](#), [Mandarin](#), [Neroli](#), [Palo Santo](#), [Patchouli](#), [Roman Chamomile](#), [Rose](#), [Sandalwood](#), [Vetiver](#), [Ylang Ylang](#)

There are hundreds of resources for sensory ideas on **TWINKL.ie** - Attachment **C** and **D** are some examples. There are also lots of **visual schedules** and **colouring sheets** available. <https://www.twinkl.ie/> It is a website for school teachers however some of the resources are useful.

They are currently providing free membership with the code- **IRLTWINKLHELPS**