

## SENSORY STRATEGIES TO HELP AT HOME

### Proprioceptive System

**Proprioception is our body's ability to sense where we are in relation to our surroundings and helps us to move more effectively and with better control. This is an internal sense that comes from the joints, muscles, ligaments and connective tissue.**

| Proprioceptive Seeker<br>Big Cup                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Proprioceptive Avoider<br>Little Cup                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Strategies (BOTH)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor body awareness</li> <li>Bumps into objects, walls, people, can appear clumsy</li> <li>Stomps - walks loudly</li> <li>Extreme force/Destructive in play</li> <li>Increased force can break toys, pencils, crayons</li> <li>Poor personal space</li> <li>Kicks, bites, hits</li> <li>Toe walking</li> <li>Prefers tight clothing</li> <li>Chews on clothing/pencils/fingers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoids or refuses swings/slides</li> <li>Avoids anything where feet leave the ground</li> <li>Low muscle tone/endurance</li> <li>Gets Dizzy/Motion Sickness</li> <li>Decreased balance/coordination</li> <li>Difficulty with visual motor skills - ball skills, handwriting</li> <li>Prefers to sit still</li> <li>Appears lazy or lethargic</li> <li>Avoids touch/hugs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bear hugs</li> <li>Shoulder/arm/hand squeezes</li> <li>Weighted animals/blankets or lap pads</li> <li>Jumping on a trampoline</li> <li>Wheelbarrow walks</li> <li>Crawling through a tunnel</li> <li>Heavy work pushing, pulling or carrying heavy item/weighted buckets</li> <li>Wall push ups</li> <li>Playdough</li> </ul> |

### Vestibular System

**Located in the inner ear, our vestibular system helps detect movement and changes in our body's relationship to gravity. GPS system of our body - are you sitting, standing, lying down, upside down, standing still or spinning?**

| Vestibular Seeker<br>Big Cup                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Vestibular Avoider<br>Little Cup                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Strategies (BOTH)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unable to sit still</li> <li>Constant motion</li> <li>Fidgeting, rocking, swinging, spinning</li> <li>Unable to get enough movement</li> <li>Runs everywhere instead of walking</li> <li>May take unsafe risks inside and outside, jumping off furniture, at playground, etc</li> <li>Enjoys being upside down or hanging off furniture</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scared of movement activities</li> <li>Fearful of playground equipment, stairs, swings</li> <li>Fearful of elevators or escalators</li> <li>Gravitational insecurity - dislikes being upside down or picked up</li> <li>Can appear clumsy or uncoordinated</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Riding bikes/trikes, scooters</li> <li>Jumping on trampolines</li> <li>Swinging - calming</li> <li>Spinning - alerting</li> <li>Sit and spin</li> <li>Cushions on chair</li> <li>Wiggle seats, spinning chairs</li> <li>Rolling down a hill or across the room</li> <li>Walking on a curb or balance beam</li> </ul> |

### Tactile System

**Anything you touch or feel. They system people notice most often if a child has an overactive or under-active tactile system.**

| Tactile Seekers<br>Big Cup                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Tactile Avoiders<br>Small Cup                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Strategies (BOTH)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Touches everything</li> <li>Hands on walls in the hallway</li> <li>Prefers tight clothing</li> <li>Always seems dirty or messy</li> <li>Seems unaware of being touched by others</li> <li>Exhibits a high pain tolerance</li> <li>Has low impulse control and seems to touch everything</li> <li>Craves vibrations</li> <li>Plays aggressively with other children, such as hitting, pushing, and pinching</li> <li>Constantly touches things around them</li> <li>Constantly mouths objects</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't like messy hands, face</li> <li>Irritated by clothing tags</li> <li>Avoid hugs/physical contact</li> <li>Avoids certain textures or clothing</li> <li>Avoids or dislikes messy play</li> <li>Exhibits distress with certain clothing such as tight pants, seams in socks, and new textures</li> <li>Is extremely ticklish</li> <li>Dislikes getting face and hands washed</li> <li>Acts anxious/over-excited to light touch</li> <li>Dislikes hair brushing, washing, drying</li> <li>Is a picky eater</li> <li>Walks only on toes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sensory bins with various textures</li> <li>Weighted blankets/lap pads</li> <li>Fidgets/stress ball</li> <li>Playdough</li> <li>Fingerpainting</li> <li>Deep pressure - squeezes, squishes with pillow or therapy ball</li> <li>Tagless clothing</li> </ul> |

### Oral Sensory System

**Taste - closely related to smell**

| Oral Seeker<br>Big Cup                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Oral Avoider<br>Small Cup                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Strategies (BOTH)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Craves or only eats certain foods</li> <li>Prefers spicy or hot foods</li> <li>Bites frequently</li> <li>Bites and/or chews nails</li> <li>Mouths non-food items/shirt, etc</li> <li>Chews furniture, toys, pencils,</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoids certain textures of foods</li> <li>Exhibits difficulty with new food</li> <li>Gags, chokes, or drools often</li> <li>Difficulty using a straw</li> <li>Experiences problems with chewing or swallowing</li> <li>Avoids mushy foods</li> <li>Avoids brushing teeth</li> <li>Fear of dentist</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blow bubbles, Whistles,</li> <li>Suck milkshakes, applesauce, yogurt through a straw</li> <li>Chew gum</li> <li>Use chewy toys/chewable jewelry</li> <li>Try a vibrating toothbrush</li> <li>Blowing out candles</li> <li>Drinking through a sports bottle</li> </ul> |

## SENSORY STRATEGIES TO HELP AT HOME

| <b>Auditory System</b><br><b>This includes hearing, listening, interpreting, localizing sounds and being able to filter and selectively attend to auditory stimuli.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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| <b>Auditory Seeker</b><br><b>Big Cup</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prefers loud music</li> <li>• Uses "Outdoor voice" all the time</li> <li>• Makes loud noises</li> <li>• Craves noises from fans, air conditioners or water running</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Auditory Avoider</b><br><b>Small Cup</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitive to noises/covers ears - bells, lawnmower, whistles, cafeteria, gym, music - causing crying screaming or anger</li> <li>• Won't flush the toilet</li> <li>• High or low volume in their voice</li> <li>• Can seem to ignore teacher/parents/adults</li> <li>• Distracted by background noise</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Strategies (Avoiders)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headphones</li> <li>• Simplify language when giving instructions - less is more</li> <li>• Provide verbal or visual warning before loud noises or about fire drills (I am going to use the vacuum or start the blender)</li> <li>• Use Calming music or white noise</li> </ul>                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Visual System</b><br><b>Using our eyes to see what is far or close to us.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Visual Seekers</b><br><b>Big Cup</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stares at bright lights, flickers, or direct sunlight</li> <li>• Stares at moving objects</li> <li>• Moves and shakes head during writing or fine motor activities</li> <li>• Holds items close for inspection</li> <li>• Seems unaware of new people/items in an environment</li> <li>• Exhibits difficulty focusing on stationary objects</li> <li>• Frequently loses the place on a page</li> <li>• Seeks visual stimulation such as spinning, patterns, fans, and fences</li> </ul> | <b>Visual Avoider</b><br><b>Small Cup</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bothered by bright lights/sun/fluorescent lighting</li> <li>• Covers eyes, squints, or screens out sights</li> <li>• Overly distracted by wall decorations or clutter</li> <li>• Eye Fatigue/headaches</li> <li>• Avoids swings/spinning</li> <li>• Excessive Blinking</li> <li>• Struggles with eye contact and locating objects</li> <li>• Struggles reading across a page</li> <li>• Struggles to copy from board</li> </ul>                                                                                       | <b>Strategies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dim lights - in the classroom we can cover the fluorescent lights with sheer shades</li> <li>• Limit visual distractions</li> <li>• Limit clutter in room</li> <li>• Try a tent to do homework in or reading</li> <li>• Sensory bottles</li> <li>• Modify homework by masking</li> <li>• Use a slant board to bring the paper more into visual field</li> <li>• Use covered overlays for reading</li> </ul> |
| <b>Olfactory</b><br><b>Our sense of smell is directly linked to our limbic system (responsible for emotional memory); often why our emotions are tied to smells &amp; food.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Olfactory Seeker</b><br><b>Big Cup</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smells objects that seem odd</li> <li>• Enjoys strong scents</li> <li>• Prefers foods with strong smells</li> <li>• Fails to notice dangerous smells</li> <li>• Tends to eat or drink dangerous items due to inability to smell "danger"</li> <li>• Exhibits trouble identifying smells of foods</li> <li>• Smells objects constantly</li> <li>• Smells people constantly</li> </ul>                                                                                                  | <b>Olfactory Avoider</b><br><b>Small Cup</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoids particular smells</li> <li>• Becomes irritated or frustrated around certain smells</li> <li>• Picky eater</li> <li>• Tends to resort to fight or flight methods when encountering certain smells</li> <li>• Gags with certain smells or foods</li> <li>• Avoids familiar foods due to smells</li> <li>• Indicates that foods do not taste appealing</li> <li>• Tells other people they smell bad</li> <li>• Avoids public places</li> <li>• Dislikes being hugged or being close to other people</li> </ul> | <b>Strategies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aromatherapy - lavender is calming, peppermint alerting</li> <li>• Scented rice play</li> <li>• Scented play dough</li> <li>• Scented markers</li> <li>• Avoid scented candles or oils if irritating</li> <li>• Avoid strong perfumes/soaps/ lotions</li> <li>• Be mindful of strong scented meals/foods</li> </ul>                                                                                         |
| <b>Interoception System</b><br><b>Internal sensory system of the body that is responsible for sensations of hunger, thirst, temperature changes, bathroom needs, etc.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Symptoms</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty with toileting</li> <li>• Never feels hungry or thirsty or</li> <li>• Always feels hungry or thirsty</li> <li>• Difficulty understanding hot/cold, pain etc</li> <li>• Difficulty regulating emotions/feelings</li> <li>• Low frustration tolerance</li> <li>• Big reactions</li> <li>• Loud talkers</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Strategies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mindfulness activities</li> <li>• Yoga</li> <li>• Heavy Work activities</li> <li>• Alerting activities</li> <li>• Repetitive and rhythmic vestibular input</li> <li>• Visual prompts/cues to identify emotions</li> <li>• Zones of Regulation</li> <li>• Social Stories</li> <li>• Visual Schedules</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

## SENSORY PREFERENCES

Place an X indicating how you perceive each sense & provide examples underneath

### AVOIDING to SEEKING Scale

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Proprioception |  |
| Vestibular     |  |
| Taste          |  |
| Smell          |  |
| Touch          |  |
| Visual         |  |
| Auditory       |  |

AVOIDING ----- NEUTRAL ----- SEEKING

# **Sensory Strategies & Routines at Home for Parents**

## **Create a Sensory-Friendly Environment**

**Calm Corner:** Designate a quiet space with soft lighting, comfortable seating (like bean bags or a tent), pillows, and calming items such as a weighted blanket or fidget toys. This serves as a place where your child can retreat when feeling overstimulated.



**Bean bags**



**Sensory tents**



**Sensory weighted blanket**



**Fidget toys**

**Reduce Clutter:** Minimize visual distractions by organizing spaces and reducing clutter to prevent sensory overload.

**Modify lighting and sound:** Avoid harsh fluorescent lights by using soft, natural light or dimmer switches to avoid harsh stimuli. For children sensitive to noise, use rugs and curtains such as drapes to dampen sound or provide noise-canceling headphones.



**Noise-cancelling headphones**

**Resources:** <https://www.autism-products.com>

## Heavy Work for Home

### Playtime Activities:

- Animal walks: Bear walks, crab walks, snake crawls (on belly), frog jumps
- Do turtle walks: Place a large pillow on the child's back and see how long they can crawl around with a "heavy shell" on their back
- March or jog in place while stomping
- Push the doorway: Stand in the doorway and push against the sides of it as hard as possible with one arm on each side. See how many seconds they can push.
- Wheelbarrow walks: Child places hands on floor, grown-up holds child's legs off floor and helps them walk with only their hands on the floor. Children should keep their fingers facing forward as much as possible. Easier = hold child's legs at knees or hips, harder = hold child's legs at the ankles
- Jump and crash into a bed mattress, large beanbag pillows, or couch cushions
- Tug-of-war: Can be done in a variety of positions such as standing, sitting, kneeling, or laying on tummy use a towel
- Jump on a trampoline
- Pour items such as sand, dry beans, dry rice, or water back and forth between containers (larger containers = more heavy work)
- Dig in a sandbox (use scoopers or hunt for buried items)
- Squeeze, squish, and smash play dough
- Play with Kinetic Sand
- Rip paper or pieces of cardboard: Give your child yesterday's newspaper or junk mail and have them tear it into strips, you can create a collage with all the different colored strips of paper. They can also help you tear up empty cereal boxes or other boxes from the store. These activities can also be especially helpful for children who need to "get out some aggression."
- Play catch with a big pillow or ball
- Complete an obstacle course or relay race
- Ride a tricycle, bicycle, scooter board
- Build a fort (include chairs and large pillows for extra heavy work while constructing)
- Lay on tummy while reading, doing a puzzle, or even doing homework
- Do yoga (google yoga for kids)
- Blow bubbles, kazoo, harmonica, whistle, pinwheel, or similar items (provides proprioceptive input orally)

# REFRAME THE BEHAVIOUR

"KIDS DO WELL IF THEY CAN"

~ROSS GREENE



"SEE A CHILD DIFFERENTLY, YOU SEE A DIFFERENT CHILD"

~Dr. Stuart Shanker

When kids exhibit challenging behaviour we can be "STRESS DETECTIVES"... finding and removing barriers.

- FIND STRESSORS → REDUCE THEM
- FIND UNMET NEEDS → MEET THEM
- FIND SKILLS DEFICITS → TEACH THEM

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