



# Sensory Savvy

## Terms

By Words First Occupational Therapists Romy-Lee Marsh and Jo Villespin

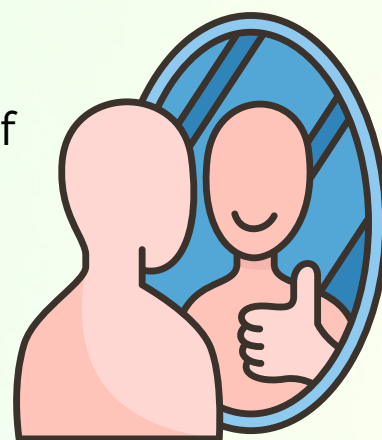
### SENSORY PROFILE

A **sensory profile** helps to understand a child/student's sensory processing pattern in everyday life situations. This questionnaire is based on answering numerous questions that involve the 7 senses, and their effect on functional performance. It gauges how often a child responds to various sensory stimuli from the environment, as well as how this affects their behaviour, attention and emotion, and ultimately their ability to participate in academic learning and play.



### SELF-REGULATION

**Self-regulation** can be defined as the act of managing thoughts and feelings to enable goal-directed action. Self-regulation is a person's ability to adjust and control their energy level, emotions, behaviours and attention.



### SENSORY OVERLOAD

**Sensory overload** is when your sensory systems take in more information than your brain can process. Students become overwhelmed by all the input considered sensory stressors (could be one or more sensory systems) and the brain responds as it would to a life-threatening situation and enters fight, flight, or freeze mode.

### SENSORY STRATEGIES

**Sensory strategies** are designed to help students remain in a calm and alert state and to enable them to focus. These strategies are used to increase their level of alertness or arousal, or to reduce alertness depending on their individual sensory needs. The aim of using sensory strategies is to help students achieve their optimal level of performance in class, therefore enabling effective learning when strategies are used. Examples of these strategies would be fidget toys, move and sit cushions, noise cancelling headphones etc.



### SENSORY ERGONOMICS

**Sensory** refers to sensation or the sensory systems. **Ergonomics** refers to the relationship between the individual and his/her environment. Sensory ergonomics can be defined as manipulating an environment like the classroom, through either adding or withdrawing sensory stimuli to meet the needs of the child and enhance functioning within the classroom. In other words, **"Changing space to accommodate learning"**.



### SENSORY DIARIES

A **sensory diary** can be kept by adults (teachers or parents) to assist younger children in developing a sensory diet. The diary keeps a record of behaviours



associated with sensory processing difficulties, to note triggers and strategies that assist the child. Children who are old enough can keep their own diary of how they are feeling throughout the day, and what strategies they use to help themselves.

### SENSORY TOOLS

**Sensory tools** are specially designed instruments, tools, devices or gadgets that assist students to regulate through their 7 sensory systems. Examples are fidget toys, move and sit cushions, noise cancelling headphones, Chewelry, weighted vests or blankets, etc. Sensory tools are part of sensory strategies and sensory programmes.







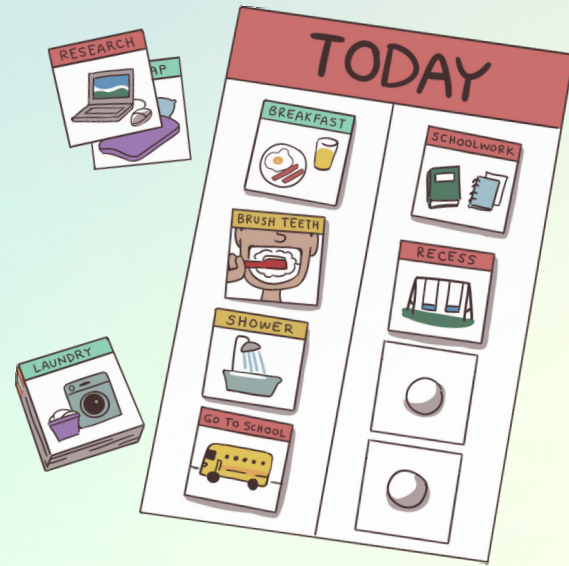
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### SENSORY DIET

Despite what it sounds like, a **sensory diet** has nothing to do with food. It is actually more like a schedule of activities to help children with sensory difficulties get through the day. Just like your child needs food throughout the day, his/her need for sensory input must also be met. A “sensory diet” (coined by OT Patricia Wilbarger) is a carefully designed, personalised activity plan that provides the sensory input a child needs to stay focused and organised throughout the day. Just as you might jiggle your knee or chew gum to stay awake, or soak in a hot tub to unwind, children need to engage in stabilising, focusing activities too. Infants, young children, teens, and adults with mild to severe sensory issues can all benefit from a personalised sensory diet. **Each child has a unique set of sensory needs.**



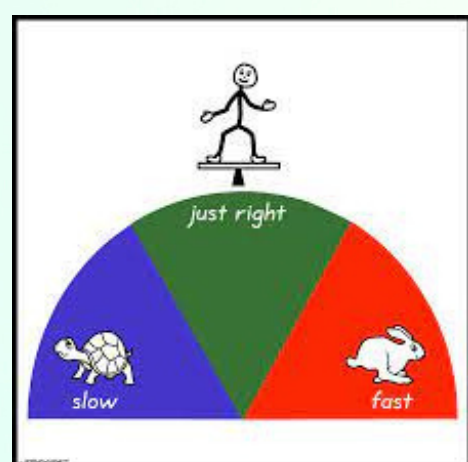
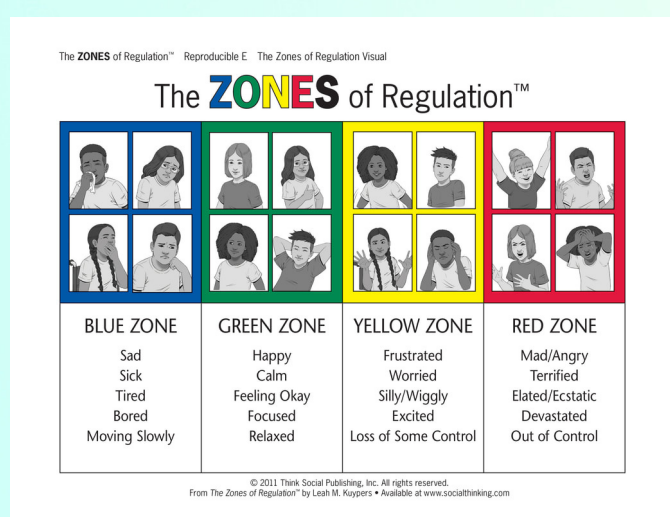
### SENSORY PROGRAMME

Programmes that are designed around impacting on the sensory systems to assist with attention, emotion, behaviour and are geared towards achieving self-regulation. Examples are a sensory diet, sensory circuits and these programs:



**1. The Zones of Regulation®** is a systematic, cognitive-behavioural approach used to teach us how to regulate our feelings, energy and sensory needs in order to meet the demands of the situation around us and be successful socially.

**2. The Alert Program®** is a user-friendly approach that helps express how regulated or alert you feel. The program emphasises how to change alert levels throughout the day, making it easy to get out of bed, work, be productive, learn, relax, and socialise.



### REGULATION STATIONS AND SENSORY CIRCUITS

**Sensory circuits or Regulation stations** are areas within the classroom or other spaces that provide varied sensory activities that students can access throughout the day. It is usually a sequence of activities done repeatedly to provide the child with the right type of sensory input to calm and organise them for the day ahead. The aim is to provide a sensory balanced atmosphere within the classroom that facilitates active learning.



### SENSORY ROOMS

**Multi-sensory rooms:** These rooms, (previously called a Snoezelen room) are specially designed therapeutic spaces that encompass multiple sensory experiences which assist with self-regulation.



**Sensory Integration Room:** A specialised room used by OT's that involves treating students in a one-on-one environment using equipment which provides increased opportunity to take in sensory information such as touch, deep pressure movement experiences, and visual information.

### MOVEMENT BREAKS

**Movement breaks** are breaks from seated learning which involve movement or opportunities to move, incorporated into the learning day. Sitting and learning requires good attention and focus which can be difficult to sustain for students with sensory differences.

