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How to implement Sensory Circuits

By the Children & Young People's Occupational Therapy Service



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Agenda

- A brief overview of Sensory regulation and our senses
- Sensory Circuits, what are they and why do we do them?
- Ideas for sensory circuits (activities for alerting, organising, and calming)
- Creating your own sensory circuits

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What is regulation?

"*Sensory regulation is the process through which our nervous system integrates and adjusts sensory input, enabling us to maintain balance and optimal levels of arousal*"



<u>Sensory behaviours</u> are a form of sensory regulation- **we only stop these if they are not safe and may cause harm**



Other factors that impact on regulation: Trauma, emotional regulation, sleep, medication, anxiety. **Sensory is only part of the picture**

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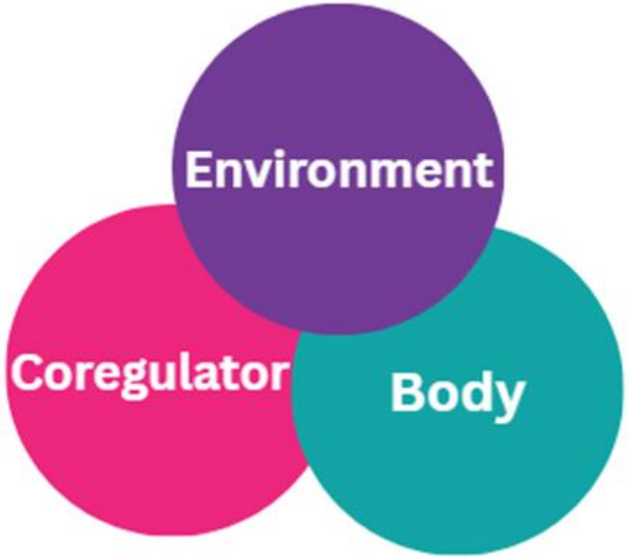
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The States of Regulation



Feeling safe

- If a child is struggling to process sensory information, they will not feel **safe in their bodies**
- It's important as educators and support staff to provide young people a setting which enables students to **feel safe in their environment**
- **Safe with our coregulators-** noticing the states of regulation to know how/when to support



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Getting to know our senses

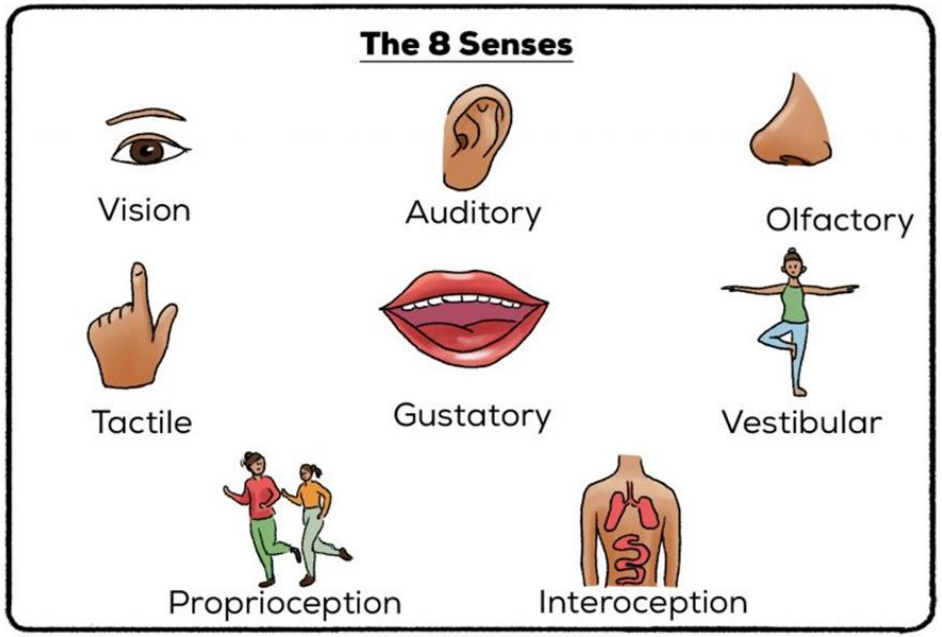
We have 8 senses:

External:

- Touch, taste, smell, sight, hearing

Internal:

- Interoception, proprioception, Vestibular



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Sensory Circuits



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What is a Sensory Circuit?

- Sensory circuits are designed to regulated our nervous system by following the sequence of alerting, organising and calming.
- Sensory circuits are done at transition points during the day, with the aim to get the young person back into the green state (alert/calm)



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Sensory Circuit Myths

- You need equipment
- You need a big space/hall
- It's just an obstacle course
- You can just do them once a week
- They are just for younger children



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The order to complete your sensory circuit

Alerting – to provide vestibular stimulation; preparing the brain for learning & for the demands of the school environment.

Organising – sorting and preparing the body and brain, providing situations to increase focus, attention span & performance; activities that require multi-sensory processing & balance.

Calming – Very important; to ensure they are calm and centred and ready to learn.

**The number of activities in each category is dependent on the child's alertness level that day.*



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Where can I do sensory circuits?

Anywhere!

- On the playground
- In the corridor
- In a sensory room/quiet space
- In the school hall
- In the classroom
- On the spot













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Alerting













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Organising













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Calming















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Whole Class Approach

- Sensory circuits can benefit everyone and can be used as a whole class approach.
- These can be short movement breaks perfect for transition times e.g. in the morning, after break in between lessons etc.
- This could look like: Danny go video- Standing on one leg- palm pushes or a game of Simon says.

Things to remember:

- High sensory seekers/those with significant sensory processing differences, will need their own personal tailored sensory circuit
- Group sensory circuits will be less effective if the group varies in alertness levels e.g. over alerted easily with under alert
- You must always follow the order of Alerting- organising- calming



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Equipment Demonstrations



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Practical Activities

Make your own sensory circuit

- **1. Get into groups. Thinking about the space and children you typically work with create a sensory circuit in your group**

- **2. Try to challenge yourself by picking from the below categories:**
- Use of all equipment
- Minimal equipment (1/2 items)
- Large space
- Small space

- 3. **Practice and be prepared to demonstrate to the group**

Key Points:

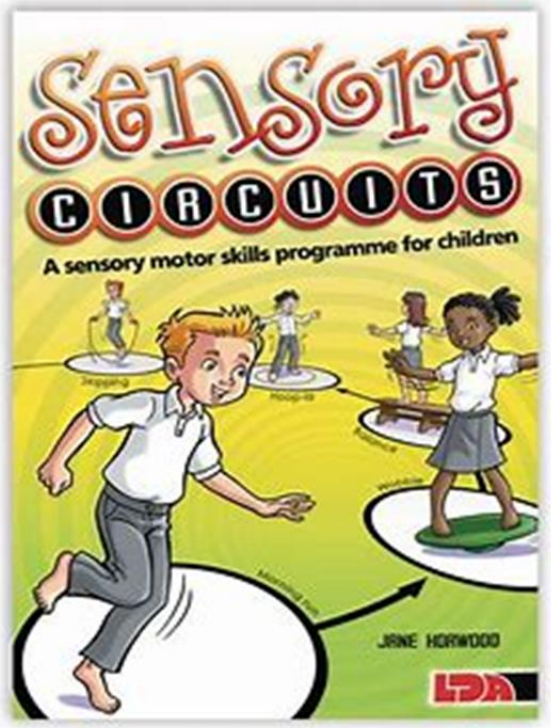
- Some children may need more intense alerting or more time in the organising,calming – you can adapt for each child.
- Make sure you know what the child's states are so you can proactively reactwith sensory circuits or top ups.
- What your body feels might not be the same as others e.g. what is calming foryou might be alerting to others.
- Remember, you can top up the sensory systems throughout the day to helpkeep them at the 'just right level'.
- Adults should motivate the child and not force them.
- Choose activities according to the child's interests.

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Further Reading

‘Sensory Circuits’ by Jane Horwood outlines the theoretical basis of Sensory Circuits and is a practical resource to assist you set up, run and monitor your circuits.



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Additional Resources

Webinar available on the CYP OT website



Activity cards



Activity idea handouts



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Questions?

Please complete our feedback form below:

