

Classroom-Friendly Sensory Strategies

Supporting diverse learners in the
mainstream classroom





Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD)

- SPD affects how the brain processes sensory input from the environment and body.
- Individuals may be overly sensitive or under-responsive to sounds, textures, lights, or movement.
- Common behaviours include covering ears, avoiding touch, or seeking intense sensations.
- These reactions can impact learning, social interactions, and daily routines.
- SPD is neurological, not behavioral, and varies from person to person.



Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD)

- With tailored strategies and resources, children can learn to manage sensory challenges more effectively in the classroom.
- Incorporating different activities throughout the school day and providing support in the form of materials can help children to meet their sensory needs, and be better regulated to participate in school activities.
- Consult an Occupational Therapist to find out what is most suitable for your students.

Flexible Seating (Circle Time / Lesson Time)

Allows movement while learning, and helps children to develop essential motor skills, strengthen their core muscles, and improve their balance and posture. When children feel comfortable, they are better able to learn, focus, and engage with the lessons.

Tips for setting up flexible seating:

- Explain the rules, follow through with expectations and consequences, then review the rules again.
- Mix and match the different seating options in the classroom.
- Allow freedom of choice, but don't be afraid to assign spots, partners, and seats.

Flexible Seating (Circle Time / Lesson Time)



Wedge cushion and wobble cushion

- Can be used on chairs or on the floor to augment posture and promote upright sitting.
- Degree of inflation can be adjusted on inflatable cushions to suit the needs of each child.
- Textured surfaces provide additional sensory inputs for children who seek tactile stimulation.
- Activates core muscles, which improves posture, stability, and overall body strength.

Flexible Seating (Circle Time / Lesson Time)

Child-sized therapy ball with base

- Provides a more space-efficient option for children to get vestibular input via bouncing.



Flexible Seating (Circle Time / Lesson Time)

Wobble Stools

- Uses small movements to help children stay focused and mentally engaged.
- Unstable base promotes active sitting, encouraging better posture and strengthening core muscles.



Weighted / Deep Pressure Items (Circle Time / Lesson Time)

Provides calming input for seated activities, provision of proprioceptive inputs, and eases feelings of anxiety.

Examples:



Weighted Lap Pad



Small Weighted Blanket



Shoulder Wrap

Fidget Tools / Handheld Sensory Items (Large Group Time)

Provides tactile inputs, helps with calming, focus, and developing fine motor skills.

Examples:



Stress Ball



Tangles



Pop-its



Theraputty



Tactile Beanbags

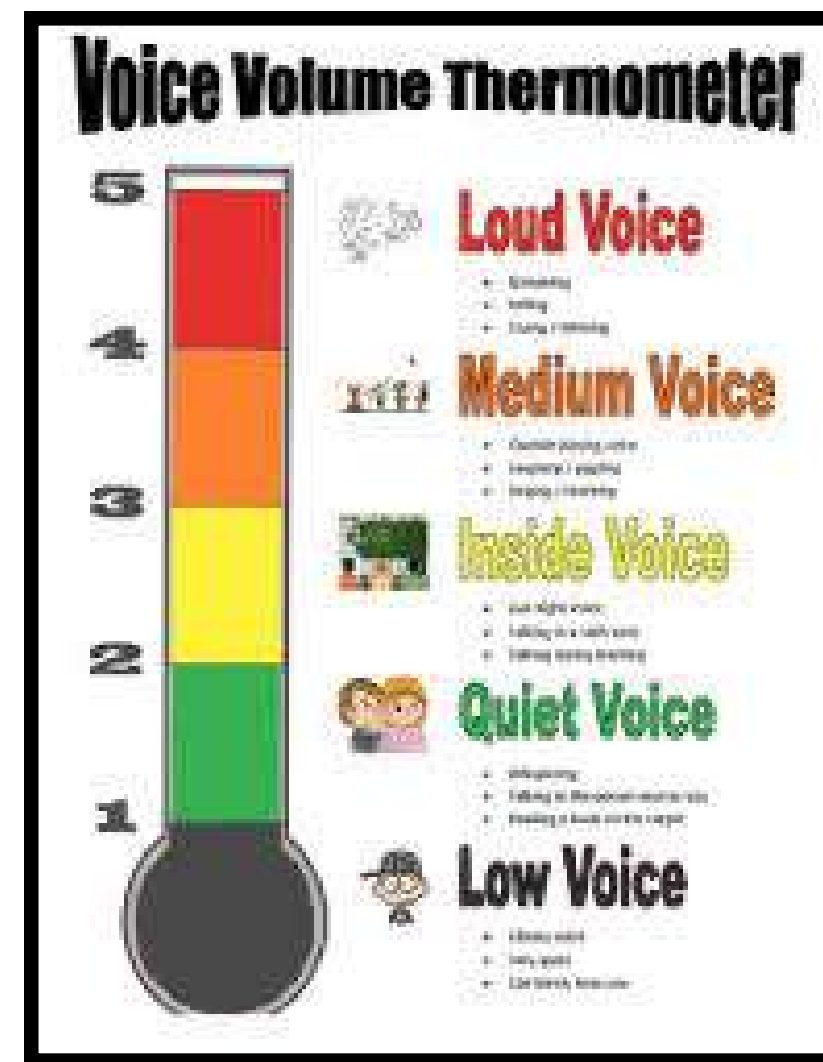
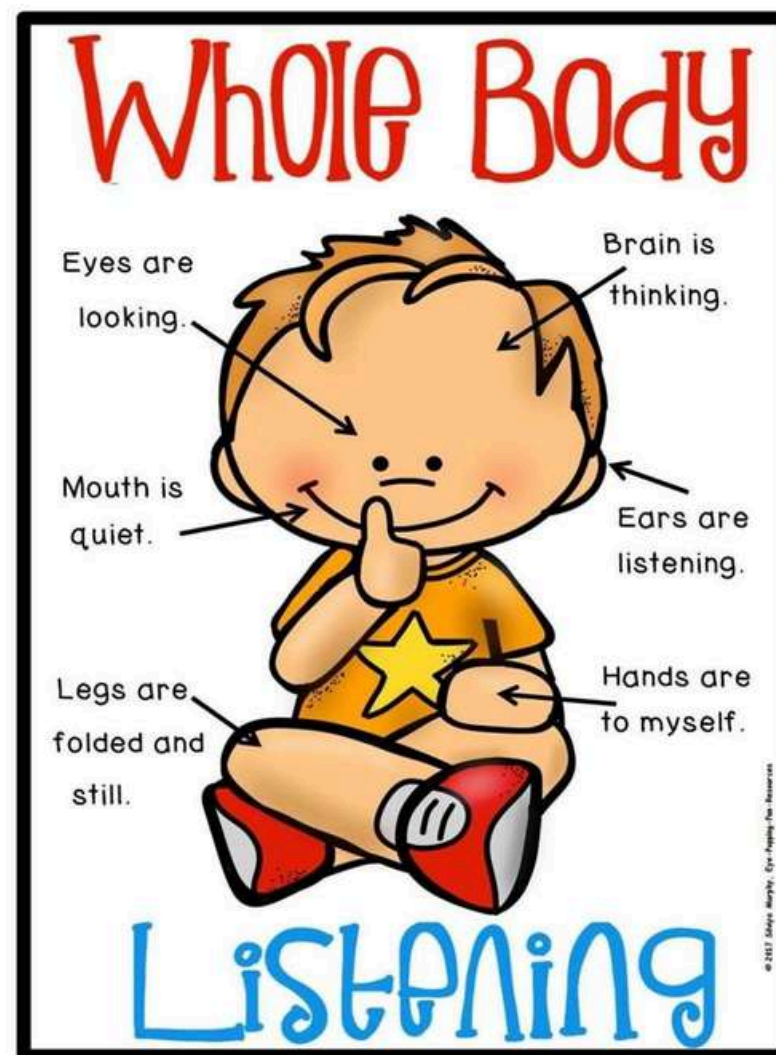


Visual Supports

Gives clear expectations and encourages independence in regulation.

Examples:

- Visual schedules
- Visual timers
- Feelings chart
- Volume Thermometer
- Whole Body Listening





Calming Corner

A safe space for children to decompress, process, and regulate their emotions.

Tips for using a calming corner:

- Use the calm corner to help children regulate emotions before a full meltdown begins.
- Set rules and establish boundaries for using the calm corner.
- Monitor the child and follow up once they appear calm.
- Reinforce emotional regulation by offering praise when children use the space appropriately.
- Ensure that the calm corner is accessible.

Calming Corner

Tips for setting up a calming corner

- Choose a quiet corner.
- Make it cosy with soft toys, cushions, beanbag chairs, or a tent.
- Provide calm-down tools (e.g., fidget toys, art supplies, books).
- Utilise visual supports (e.g. feelings chart, breathing techniques).



Stationery (Work Time and Art Time)

Weighted Pencil

- Enhances proprioceptive input, helping children to become more aware of their hand and arm movements.
- This increased sensory feedback supports better pencil grasp, fine motor control, writing pressure, and more precise handwriting.



Stationery (Work Time and Art Time)

Adaptive Scissors

- Helps children who have difficulties in using normal scissors to participate in cutting activities more safely and independently.
- Ergonomically designed to minimise strain and fatigue, making cutting more comfortable.



Loop Scissors




Lever Scissors



Left-handed Scissors



Heavy Work

- Involves muscle-based tasks like pushing, pulling, or lifting that activate the proprioceptive system, which helps calm the nervous system and organise sensory input.
- These activities support body awareness, helping children understand where their body is in space and how to move it effectively.
- Heavy work can balance energy levels, reduce sensory overload, and promote a calm, focused  state for learning and interaction.



Heavy Work (Indoor and Outdoor Gross Motor Activities)

Examples:

- Carrying or pushing small weighted items (e.g., beanbags, baskets, carts).
- Animal walks (e.g., bear crawl, crab walk, frog jumps).
- Building with large blocks.
- Tug-of-war with a soft rope.
- Chair push-ups or wall pushes.
- Climbing stairs.
- Hopscotch.



Heavy Work (Classroom Activities / Transition Time)

Examples:

- Erasing whiteboards.
- Wiping or sweeping the tables.
- Carrying and stacking chairs.
- Taking out and keeping mattresses or cots.
- Carrying classroom materials (e.g., a stack of books, learning corner baskets).



Tactile Play and Sensory Bins

- Involves activities that stimulate touch, sound, sight, smell, and movement.
- Supports language development, motor skills, cognitive growth, and social interaction, and also engages the proprioceptive and tactile systems, which help with body awareness and balance.



Playdough



Sand and Water Play



Sensory Bin



Finger Painting



Summary

Start with fidgets, adaptive stationery, weighted lap pads, flexible seating, and a calm corner — these are quick and easy to implement solutions.

Add tactile play, movement breaks, and heavy work as needed.

Larger equipment (e.g. swings and trampolines) can be added if space and resources allow.

Remember to consult an Occupational Therapist to determine the best support for your students.

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