

SENSORY DIFFERENCES AUTISM

Some people with autism have “sensory” differences. This means they may respond differently to touch, sounds, light, smell or taste. These activities give students ideas of how sensory input affects our ability to be alert and some ideas for strategies to address sensory issues.

Set-Up

- *Move’n sit/wedges/vibrating cushions* placed on rug (younger grades) or chairs(older grades – one at each table) – *Explain that they will be passed around so everyone gets to try each one.*
- On desks: *burlap scarves, crayons/pencils*
- *Pressure vests* – *ask kids “Who has a hard time sitting still?”, and see if they want to try a vest*
- *Any simple worksheet activity*
- *Candy* (sour, strong, minty, regular lollipops)

Activity

- 1) Discuss senses (have children name the senses: taste, smell, hear, see, touch)
- 2) Therapist adds and discusses movement and body awareness.
 - a. Movement
 - i. Who gets sick on roller coasters? Who likes them?
 - ii. Trampoline (wakes you up), rocking chair (calms you down)
 - b. Body Awareness
 - i. Have children find a partner to play body awareness games/experiments
 1. Therapists demonstrate and explain: One partner closes eyes. The partner with their eyes closed gets their arm/hand/fingers moved into a funky position and tries to copy it with the other arm (eyes still closed). Switch partners.
 2. Therapists demonstrate and explain: Finger identification game. Cross arms at wrist with palm to palm. Interlace fingers. Twist down to floor, back towards body and up to the ceiling. Ending position: hands in front of chest, right hand on the

left, left hand on the right. One partner points (does not touch) a specific finger on their partners hand and the partner tries to move that finger. Do a few fingers, then try with touch (notice that touch makes it easier and tells person where their fingers are).
Switch partners.

- 3) Discuss how different tastes either awaken or calm our bodies. Have them choose either a sour/spicy (cinnamon) candy or regular lollipop. Talk about how sucking helps us regulate (babies suck their thumbs, pacifier, bottle).
- 4) Have children tie burlap scarf loosely around their necks.
- 5) Explain worksheet and have them begin. While they are trying to work flicker lights, play static on the radio and other music, slam door, pop bubble wrap, talk to each other, etc.
- 6) Discuss the experience and answer any questions.