

# Caring for a Child with Sensory Differences

## Strategies Guide



*Prepared By*

Kinship Caregivers  
Connect

*With Support of*



Ohio Kinship and  
Adoptive Navigators  
Program



## Table of Contents

Visual Strategies .....	2
Auditory Strategies .....	2
Olfactory Strategies .....	3
Gustatory Strategies.....	3
Tactile Strategies .....	3
Proprioceptive Strategies.....	4
Vestibular Strategies .....	4
Sensory Diet.....	5
Activity Corner or Obstacle Course .....	5
Calming Corner or Hideout Space .....	5
Sensory Kit/Bin.....	5
Sensory Diet Example.....	6
Activity Corner/Obstacle Course Example .....	7
Calming Corner/Hideout Space Example .....	8
Sensory Kit/Bin Example.....	9



## Visual Strategies (sense of sight)

- Alerting
  - Use fluorescent light or bright light
  - Use bright colors
  - Seeing fast moving visuals objects or rapidly changing images
    - Example: watching a sensory rain stick
- Calming
  - Use low intensity light or no light
  - Use soft colors
  - Seeing slow moving objects
    - Example: watching a lava lamp
  - Block out visual distractions or limit distractions on walls
    - Example: using a divider for homework time

## Auditory Strategies (sense of hearing/sound)

- Alerting
  - Hearing irregular or contrasting sounds
    - Switch between high and low pitch when speaking
    - Play music that has varying tones/pitches
- Calming
  - Hearing melodious or rhythmic sounds
    - Play soft, instrumental music
  - Speak slowly and softly, whisper, or speak in a monotone voice
  - Use noise-canceling headphones in moderation
    - Use in moderation because completely limiting surrounding sounds can cause higher sensitivity to noise

## Olfactory Strategies (sense of smell)

- Alerting
  - Smelling minty or citrusy essential oils or candles
    - Examples: peppermint, spearmint, orange
- Calming
  - Smelling sweet or soothing essential oils or candles
    - Examples: lavender, chamomile, vanilla
  - Use Nat Pat Zen stickers
    - Link: <https://www.natpat.com/pages/zenpatch>

## Gustatory Strategies (sense of taste)

- Alerting
  - Eating spicy, crunchy, salty, sour, citrusy, or chewy foods
    - Example: eating carrots or pretzels
  - Drinking a cold beverage
- Calming
  - Eating foods with a smooth texture
    - Example: eating yogurt or pudding
  - Drinking a warm beverage or thickened liquids
  - Using a straw to drink liquids
  - Blowing bubbles

## Tactile Strategies (sense of touch)

- Alerting
  - Washing hands with cold water or holding something cold
  - Wearing cooler clothing
  - Clapping hands
- Calming
  - Washing hands with warm water
  - Using a lap-desk or pillow on lap
  - Hugging
  - Rolling up in a blanket



## Proprioceptive Strategies (sense of the position of our body and limbs, body awareness)

- Alerting
  - Using light pressure
    - Example: brushing arm with a feather or paintbrush
- Calming
  - Using moderate to deep pressure
    - Examples: using a weighted blanket, hug with a light squeeze, self-hugs
  - Doing heavy work
    - Examples: doing wall push-ups, carrying a laundry basket or stack of books, climbing)

## Vestibular Strategies (sense of movement and balance)

- Alerting
  - Using circular movement
    - Examples: spinning, using tire swing
  - Using rapid, forward movement
    - Example: running
  - Change positions often
  - Take movement breaks during longer tasks/activities
- Calming
  - Using linear and rhythmic movement
    - Examples: rocking, swinging back and forth
  - Slowing down the pace of an activity or play



## Sensory Diet

- What it is: set of activities that provide appropriate sensory input for a person's needs
  - Called a “diet” since each person's sensory needs are different, so the activities are catered to them
  - Activities can be calming or alerting
  - When it can be used:
    - If someone is seeking sensory input
    - If someone needs to regulate from overstimulation
    - If someone has difficulty with transitions
    - If someone has difficulties with being inattentive or impulsive
    - If someone has difficulty with sleep
  - See page # for example & page # for template

## Activity Corner or Obstacle Course

- If someone is sensory seeking, you can set up an activity corner or obstacle course
  - Include opportunities for movement (e.g., jumping, climbing)
  - Add sensory items, like fidgets, weighted blankets, etc.
  - Can use for movement breaks or to engage with before a different activity
  - See page # for example

## Calming Corner or Hideout Space

- If someone gets easily over-stimulated, you can set up a calming corner or hideout space
  - Ensure environment is isolated, quiet, and dimly lit
  - Add sensory items, like headphones, eye mask, any item that calms
  - Can use for breaks during longer tasks or when child is over-stimulated
  - See page # for example


## Sensory Kit/Bin


- If someone is under-stimulated, you can set up a sensory kit/bin
  - Use materials that stimulate sight, touch, hearing, etc.
    - Examples: dyed rice, bright colored beads
  - Use kit/bin as a warm-up for other activities
  - Can make environment around kit/bin stimulating with bright lights and upbeat music
  - See page # for example

## Sensory Diet Example


# Sensory Diet Example

Toddler can't fall asleep at night

- 

1. Dim lights
- 

2. Read story in a rocking chair
- 

3. Apply lavender scented lotion
- 

4. Watch night light with slowly changing colors

## Activity Corner/Obstacle Course Example





## Calming Corner/Hideout Space Example



## Sensory Kit/Bin Example

