

Sensory Integration and Processing

Supporting Individuals with Anxiety, Anger, or Aggression

☀️ Why It Matters

Everyone depends on seven senses to experience life: taste, smell, hearing, sight, touch, balance, and body-awareness. If any of these senses are not fully integrated, the individual may experience hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity, leading to anxiety, confusion, or aggression. Supporting sensory balance reduces stress and enhances self-regulation.

Sensory integration forms the foundation for how individuals interpret and respond to their environment. When sensory input is overwhelming (hypersensitivity) or under-stimulating (hyposensitivity), the brain can lose coherence, leading to distress or behavioural challenges.

💡 Balanced sensory input promotes calmness, focus, and emotional stability.

🧠 Sensory Integration and Processing

A sensory diet—developed with guidance from an Occupational Therapist—can help individuals regulate their sensory experiences. Such a plan includes customized activities that stimulate or calm specific senses. Supporters should observe which activities an individual seeks out or avoids, as these may reveal underlying sensory needs and guide whether to refer to an Occupational Therapist for further assessment.

👂 Audio Sensory Processing

Auditory irregularities can contribute significantly to anxiety or aggression. Low-frequency sounds may trigger fight-or-flight responses, while diminished sensitivity can impair engagement. Interventions like sound therapy or training the middle-ear muscles can help reduce hypersensitivity and improve communication and social connection.

⚖️ Sensory Screening and Regulation Practices

Supporters can use structured observation to identify sensory needs and support balance:

- Track reactions to touch, movement, sound, and light to spot patterns of over- or under-sensitivity.
- Incorporate sensory-based activities like swinging, bouncing, or using weighted blankets to regulate input.
- Address gut health to improve neurotransmitter balance and overall sensory regulation.
- Adjust environments—dim lighting, reduce clutter, and add soft textures to promote calm.

🔧 Core Tools for Supporters

Focus Area / Challenge	Optimal Solutions
Identifying Sensory Needs	Observe behavioural responses and consult with an occupational therapist for assessment.
Balancing Sensory Input	Implement sensory diets with calming and stimulating activities based on needs.
Managing Audio Sensitivity	Use ear protection, adjust noise levels, and explore sound therapy, if needed.
Creating Calm Environments	Establish predictable routines and sensory-friendly spaces.
Promoting Self-Regulation	Model calm, mindful behaviour and support awareness of sensory experiences.

💡 Key Takeaway

Balancing sensory input reduces anxiety and fosters self-regulation. Through observation, collaboration, and structured sensory activities, supporters can help individuals feel calmer, safer, and more engaged in everyday life.

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