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Sensory Diet and Home Activities for Sensory-Related Issues

Does your child have problems learning or exhibit any of the following behaviors? *Fall off chairs, knock things off desks, disorganized, clumsy, awkward, uncoordinated, have difficulty with anger management, distractible, easily frustrated, daydream, intolerance to touch, avoid messy activities, poor fine motor coordination, normal intelligence but trouble learning to read or do math?* Many of these symptoms are indicators that their sensory motor foundation needs additional input so they can have more organized, purposeful control of their body.

The term sensory diet is based on the idea that each individual requires a certain amount of activity and sensation to be most alert, adaptable and skillful. Similar to nutritional requirements, our bodies also need sustenance for our nervous system for arousal, attention and successful interactions within our social and physical environment. A sensory diet is not a specific intervention technique. Rather, it is a strategy for developing individualized home programs that are practical, carefully scheduled and based on the concept that controlled sensory input can affect functional abilities.

This is a constructed activity plan designed to meet the needs of your child. All activities should be incorporated into daily life and these activities must be practical and consider the needs of the entire family or they will not become an integrated piece in your child's day. If you notice any activities that leave an aversive (negative) response, consult your therapist so adjustments can be made. This should be fun and nourishing for not only the nervous system, but also for the soul.

Points to consider:

-Activities that require whole body actions, make muscles work hard, involve deep pressure or slow rhythmic movement can have a lasting effect for 2 to 6 hours after the activity is over

Specific components to sensory diets:

- They must be time oriented and part of a routine: wake-up routine, breakfast routine
- Be aware of sensory qualities of daily events- control the type and amount of input
- Provide opportunities for deep pressure, heavy work and movement.
- Make sure there are cuddly spaces/hideouts available for when the child is overstimulated. Pay close attention to transitions because these are times that can induce added stress.
- Fear is very real and usually based within the nervous system- it may not be under the child's control

***Preferences must be respected or you will defeat your purpose and create different problems

Sensory Diet Activities:

Wake Up Routine

- Run stairs to get drink
- Rolling in bed, jump and crash in bed
- Wheel Barrow to bathroom
- Dancing to music to get dressed

Meal Routine

- Dynamic Sitting: on ball, standing
- Start with crunchy or chewy
- Cereal/pretzels/bagels as snack on bus or in class
- Use straw for yogurt, applesauce, pudding
- Weighted vest/pillow on lap

Transitions

- Red light, green light or go-go-go-stop games
- Songs: this is the way we...
- Animal walks
- Carry heavy items, push/pull items,
- Picture calendar/list to show events for day- cross off items when done

School or Desk Time

- Fidgets to squeeze or manipulate
- Desk push-ups
- Dynamic sitting: T stool, standing, on stomach for writing
- Chores: stacking chairs, erasing board, errands
- Water bottle on desk

Bath time

- Scrub with washcloth/brush
- Cool shower
- Variety of soap textures/ shaving cream
- Dark environment with candle only and little talking

Meal Prep

- Knead/roll dough, tenderize meat, stir with hands
- Get items for parents during meal preparation

Grocery/Shopping

- push cart, carry bags/jugs, put groceries away

Play and around the house

- Vacuum, move furniture,
- Read in rocking chair, lying on stomach or with weighted pillows
- Sandwich game with couch cushions
- Make obstacle courses
- Tug of war, leap frog, jumping on trampoline
- Roll up in blanket to make hot dog or burrito- deep pressure
- Rough house with couch cushions- make sundaes and add items
- Swing in varying positions: on stomach, in circles, catching balls while
- Swinging, kicking targets from swing

Yard

- Digging, box with beans or popcorn kerns to find treasures
- swing set /jungle gym/ trampoline

Bedtime

- Weighted blankets or various textures
- Pressures
- slow rocking before bedtime or story