

Well-being for Early Childhood:

Strategies to support adult wellbeing and emotional regulation to facilitate co-regulation with young children.

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Introduction

Sara Daniel, LCW, MSW, Executive Director of Daniel Educational Services has been facilitating transformational change through coaching and collaboration with school leadership teams, staff professional development and student specific consultation. She specializes in supporting schools to create successful outcomes for all students including those impacted by trauma and mental health challenges. She has worked with countless school districts and early care education centers nationwide and trained thousands of individuals on Trauma Sensitive Schools. Sara is a former school administrator at a Milwaukee public charter school. She has been a senior coach and consultant for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Trauma Sensitive School Initiative and the co-author of the Trauma Sensitive Schools Learning Module Series <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/trauma/modules>. Sara is also certified clinician and trainer in Dr. Bruce Perry's Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT) and the Neurosequential Model of Education (NME). From 2014-19 she was the leader of the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Interface Master Trainer Project for the state of Wisconsin, which promotes public education about ACEs and the development of self-healing communities in partnership with Laura Porter and Dr. Robert Anda.



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Learning Objectives

- Participants in this session will be able to describe three different brain states and the sequential nature of processing in the brain.
- Participants in this session will apply this knowledge to state dependent strategies that support adult self-regulation. They will be able to identify appropriate strategies at each state that will support emotional regulation and co-regulation with children.
- Participants in the session will build an individual self-regulation plan for implementation of these strategies.

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Regulation Activity

Pair up

Stand if it is comfortable

- 1, 2, 3
- Clap, 2, 3
- Clap, Snap, 3
- Clap, Snap, Slap
(repeat from beginning)

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What is Well-being?

Turn and talk: What is well-being to you?

Share a time that you believe you achieved a state of well-being
or

Talk about someone that you believe has well-being

Focus on describing what it is...not what it is not.



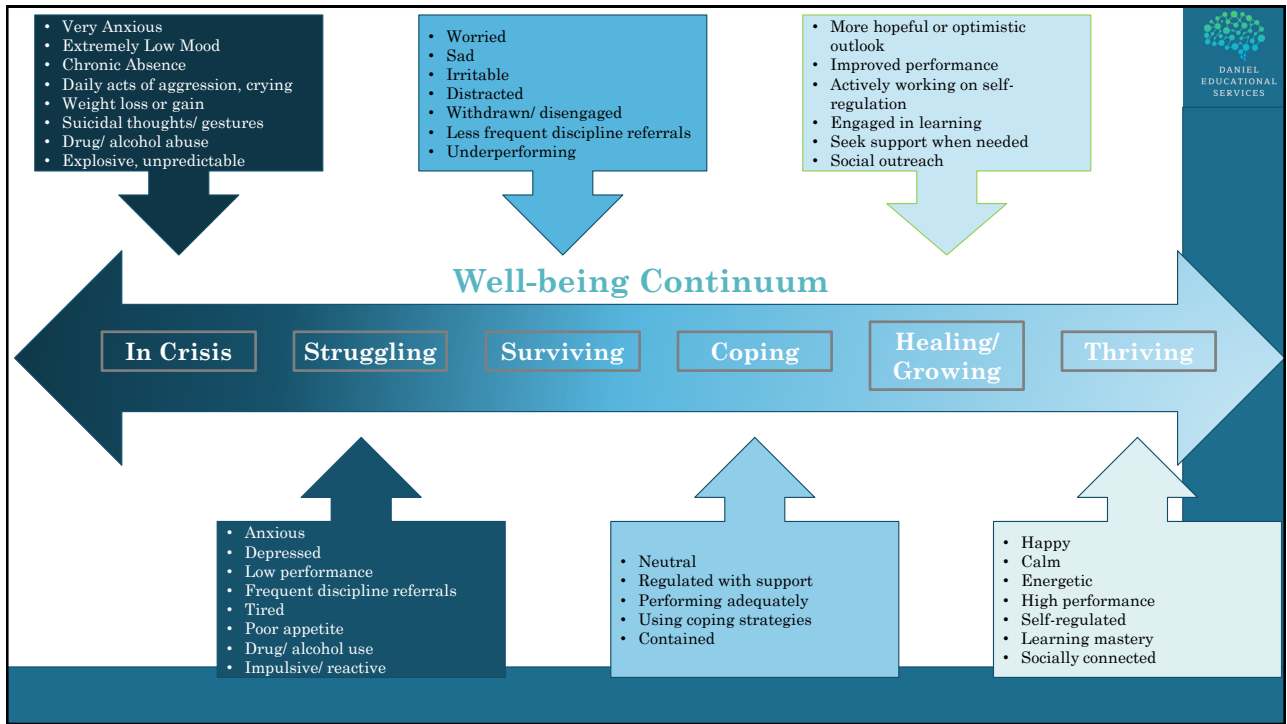
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Well-being Defined

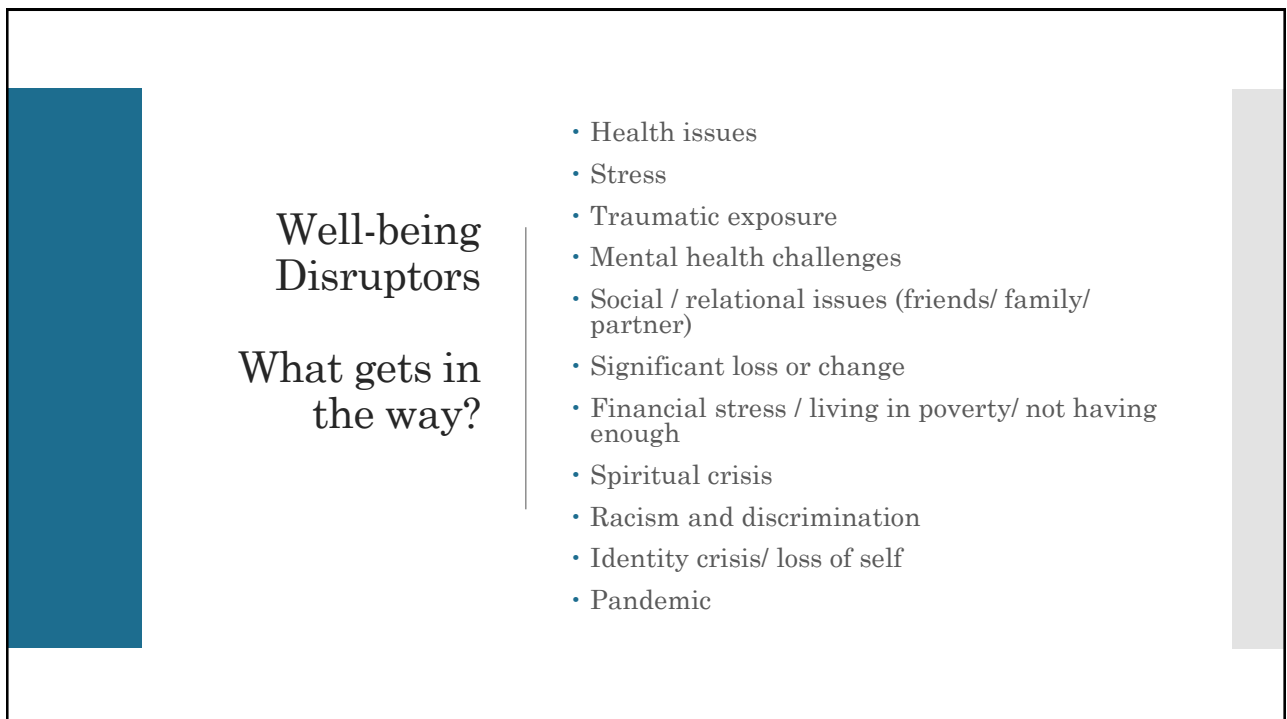
- Not simply the absence of illness or problems
- Includes the presence of positive emotions and satisfaction with life.
- Having fulfillment and positive functioning.
- Having a sense of peace and balance

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018, October 31). Well-being Concepts. Retrieved January 29, 2023, from <https://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/wellbeing.htm#three>

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Types of Stress

Stress is our body preparing to respond to challenges

Positive:

Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevation in stress hormone levels

Tolerable:

Serious, temporary stress responses buffered by supportive relationships.

Toxic:

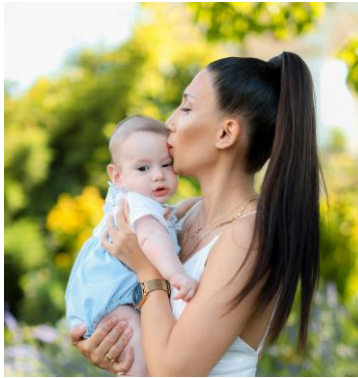
Prolonged activation of the stress response system in the absence of protective relationships.

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Toxic Stress In Children



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People in roles where caring and empathy is required

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Primary trauma

Stress

Compassion Fatigue

Burnout

Secondary traumatic stress

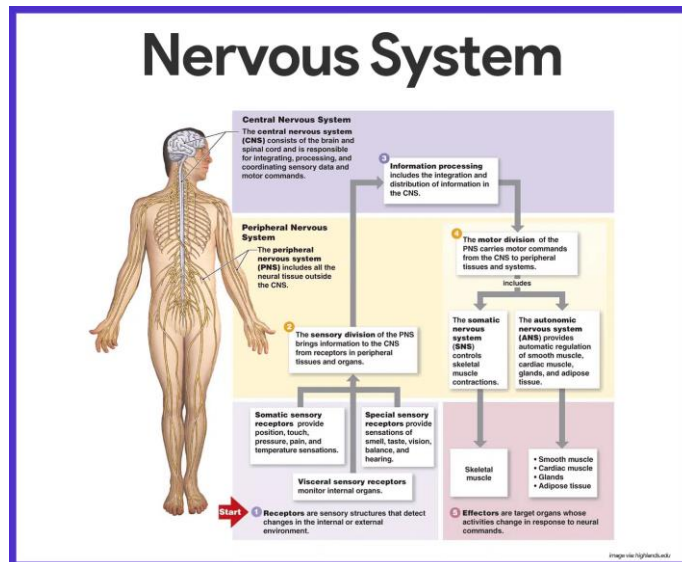
Compassion resilience

Compassion satisfaction

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The brain and body

- Central nervous system- brain and spinal cord
- Peripheral nervous system
 - Autonomic nervous system – nerves that go to organs; involuntary functions
 - Somatic nervous system – nerves that go to skin and muscles
- Messages flow between brain and body



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Neuroception

- The continual subconscious process of determining whether a situation is safe, dangerous, or life threatening
- It is different from “perception” which implies cortical awareness
- A neuroception of safety is needed before social engagement can occur
- Faulty neuroception may lie at the root of many psychiatric disorders including autism, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, depression and reactive attachment disorder.

Porges, Stephen W. *Zero to Three (J)*, v24 n5 p19-24 May 2004

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How does stress show up for you? Fight, flight or freeze?



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Flock and Fawn



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Dorsal Vagal (Flight/ Freeze)

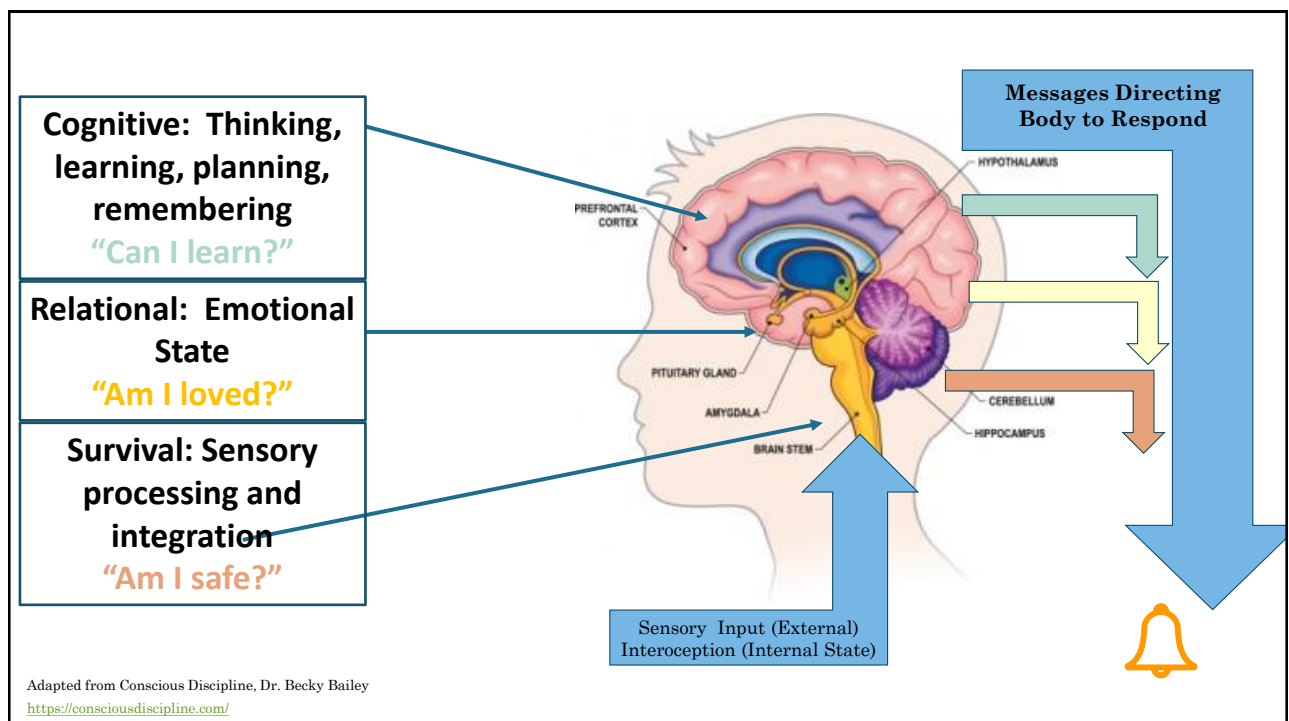
- Inability to empathize
- Addictions
- Diminished creativity
- Inability to embrace complexity
- Minimizing / denying
- Chronic exhaustion / physical ailments
- Avoidance/ inability to listen
- Dissociation/ numbing/ checking out
- Seeking distraction
- Feeling helpless or hopeless

Sympathetic (Fight/Flight)

- Sense of persecution
- Externalizing: complaining/ blaming
- Fear
- Guilt
- Anger and rage
- Cynicism/ Cynical humor
- Egocentrism
- Grandiosity & self-importance especially related to work.
- Self-righteousness

Adapted from Vandernoot Lipsky, L. Trauma Stewardship, 200

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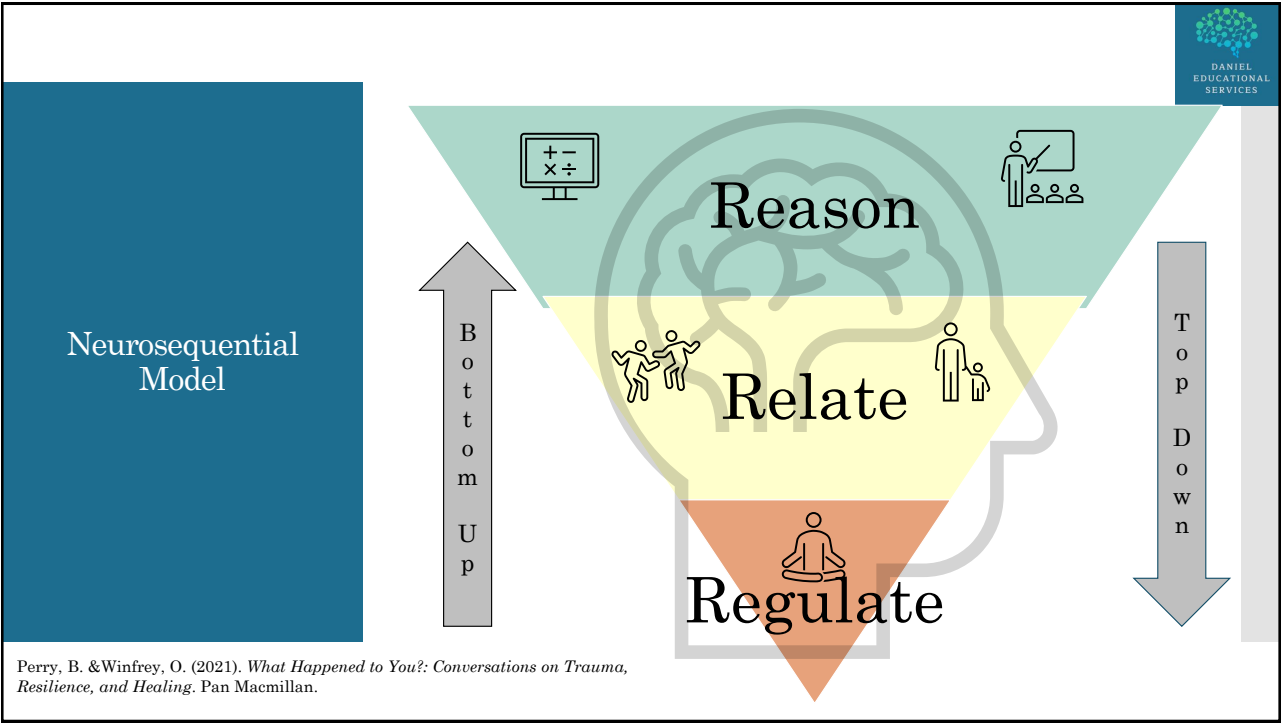


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Mental State	Cognition	Primary / Secondary Brain Areas	Hyperarousal Continuum	Dissociative Continuum	Functional IQ
Calm	Abstract	Cortex	Rest/ Reflect	Rest/ Reflect	120-100
Alert	Concrete	Cortex Limbic	Vigilance/ Flock	Avoid	110-90
Alarm	Emotional	Limbic Diencephalon	Resistance/ Freeze	Comply	100-80
Fear	Reactive	Diencephalon Brainstem	Defiance/ Flight	Dissociate	90-70
Terror	Reflexive	Brainstem Autonomic Nervous System	Aggression/ Fight	Shut down/ Collapse	80-60

Perry, B. & Winfrey, O. (2021). *What Happened to You?: Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing*. Pan Macmillan.

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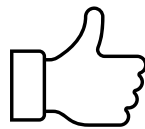


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Three ways to regulate

Bottom up
Rhythmic
Repetitive
Sensory base

SENSING



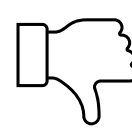
Relational
Connection
Empathy
Belonging

FEELING



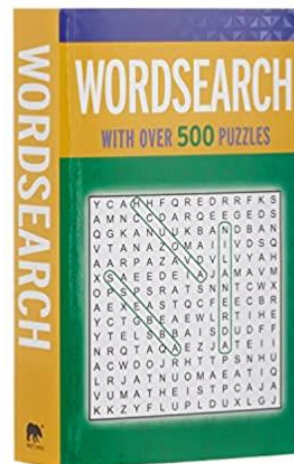
Top down
Cognitive
Processing of thoughts
Words

THINKING



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Activity



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What is the impact?

Learning

- Organization
- Cause and effect
- Memory
- Executive functioning
- Attention issues
- Academic engagement
- Intrusive thoughts
- Receptive and expressive language
- Fine motor skills
- Academic risk taking / fear of failure

Behavior

- Frustration tolerance
- Reactivity
- Impulsivity
- Vigilance/ dissociation
- Relational engagement
- Emotional regulation
- Social and emotional development
- Aggression
- Withdrawal
- Perfectionism

Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative, 2012

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Neuroplasticity

- The brain's ability to change and form new connections
- Remains true throughout our lifetime
- Sensitive periods in early childhood and adolescence



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Resilience can be...

Something that you are born with

Something that you learn

Something that happens due to your environment

Something that you can get through relationship and connection with others



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The CARER Framework

Co-regulation

Authentic connection

Resilience through intentionality

Education and empowerment

Responsibility and repair



Carer: Someone who cares for the well-being of another person.

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C Co-Regulation

(Brainstem/ Diencephalon/ Autonomic Nervous System)

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Self-regulation is defined as the act of managing cognition and emotion to enable goal-directed actions such as organizing behavior, controlling impulses, and solving problems constructively.

- Foundation of lifelong functioning
- Developed through **co-regulation**
- Can be defined as warm and responsive interactions which help child to understand, express, and modulate thoughts, feelings and behavior through prolonged or pronounced stress and adversity
- Can be taught with focused attention, support and practice
- Key developmental periods early childhood and adolescence

Murray, D. et al (2015), Self regulation and Toxic Stress Report 1: Foundations for Understanding Self-Regulation from an Applied Developmental Perspective, Center for Child and Family Policy, Duke University

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Am I Safe?

Sensory input from body to lower parts of the brain

Brain stem seeks patterned, repetitive, rhythmic, somatosensory input.

Safety triggers ventral vagal state

Allows access to relational and cortical parts of the brain

Supports feelings of emotional well-being



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Co-regulation always starts with a regulated carer.

Adult Sensory List:

What are your sensory preferences? Seeking / Avoiding

How do you get those needs met during the work day?



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Sensory Areas

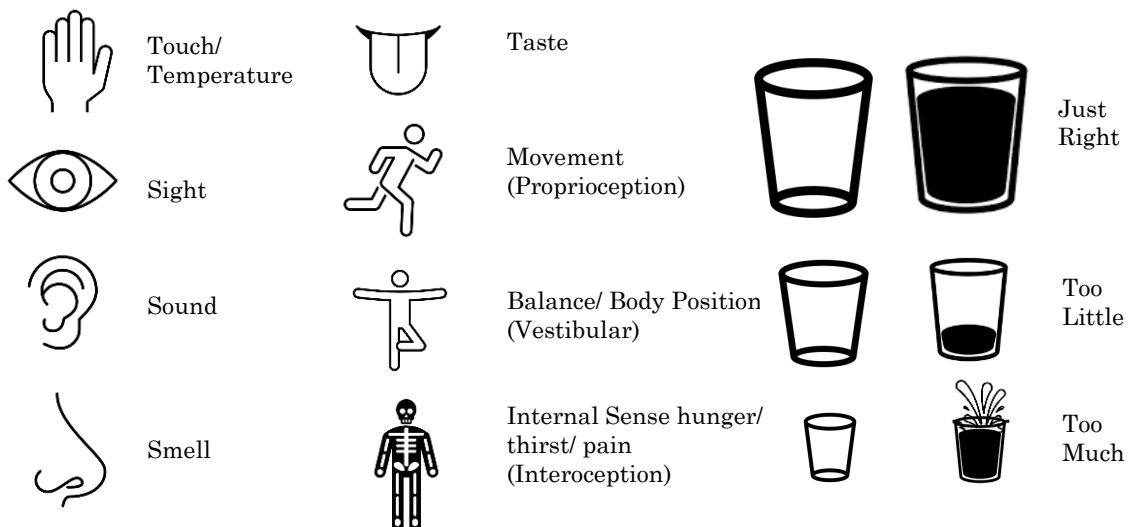
Seeking or Avoiding

- Touch
- Movement (Proprioception)
- Balance (Vestibular)
- Hearing
- Sight
- Taste
- Smell
- Internal state (Interoception)



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Sensory Self-Assessment



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Sensory resource for children



Seeking			Avoiding		
Typical	Problematic	What educators can do?	Typical	Problematic	What educators can do?
Touches surfaces, runs hands along walls	Lacks personal space boundaries	Use tight squeeze (e.g., bear hug), hand massage, heavy work	Avoids touch (i.e., not a "hugger")	Flinches at touch Overly responsive to pain	Give advance warning of touch
May lean into others or against surfaces	Under responsive to pain	Have student wear snug, athletic top	Avoids certain clothing or textures	Overly distressed by seams, tags and other textures	Approach student from the front
Prefers tight clothes	Aggressive to other children - may push or hit	Teach personal bubble using hula hoop/other visual cue	Avoids messy activities (e.g., finger painting)	Refuses hair brushing and bathing	Give language to set personal boundaries (I'm not a big hugger)
Consistently dirty		Provide fidget toys, spinners, dough, clay, finger paints	Does not like to be barefoot, toe walks	Anxiety with light touch or in crowds	Have student dress in layers
Craves vibration		Teach body scan to identify pain		Refuses to stand in line	Provide safe area in class or extra space

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Peace
Protectors

Intentionally doing what brings you joy

Limiting exposure to negativity

Self Compassion

Let go of what no longer serves you

Forgiveness

Boundaries

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My Emotional Regulation Plan

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Online free Community of Practice sessions

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