


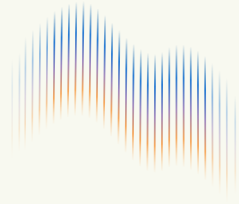




# SENSORY ANCHORS FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE SUFFERED TRAUMA

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“Trauma is not just an event that took place in the past; it is also the imprint left by that experience on mind, brain and body”

*Bessel van der Kolk in The Body Keeps the Score*

<p>OLFACTORY ANCHORS (THE POWER OF SCENT)</p> 	<p>AUDITORY ANCHORS (THE POWER OF SOUND)</p> 
<p>TACTILE ANCHORS (THE POWER OF TOUCH)</p> 	<p>PROPRIOCEPTIVE ANCHORS (THE POWER OF PRESSURE)</p> 

Trauma lives in the body. When the body remembers that it is safe, then healing can begin. **Sensory Anchors** can be a smell, a sound, or a touch that acts as a golden thread to lead a child’s nervous system back into a calm, connected state. This guide helps you to identify the **Sensory Anchors** that ground your child in the “Here and Now”

# YOUR HOME SENSORY TOOLKIT

## When do we use a Sensory anchor?

Before we deploy a sensory anchor, we need to know when to use one. By reading our children's body language, we can help them before they hit the point of no return.

### EARLY WARNING SIGNS



Long before our children are "acting" out, they may already be feeling unsafe. Here are some signs to look out for

**Fight/Flight State:** High, tight shoulders, shallow breathing, fast-moving eyes, tight facial muscles. They may also seem restless or "hyper"

**Shutdown State:** They may look blank or glassy-eyed, have a slumped posture, seem "out of it", or not present

**The Goal:** To present a sensory anchor while they are still "in the room" with us, before they are fully overwhelmed

## Simple Ways to Help

### SMELLS & TASTES



#### **The Goal: Quick Comfort**

The sense of smell is directly linked to the emotional part of the brain; this can bypass any "logic" which is stuck during stress

- **Try this:** A small jar with a piece of fabric soaked in a strong essential oil like vanilla or lavender
- **Try this:** A strongly flavoured cold drink or a piece of citrus fruit to bite into. The flavour punch can bring them back to the *Here and Now*

## TOUCH & TEXTURES



### **The Goal: *Feeling Solid***

Guiding a child who is “lost” or “floaty” to feel where their body begins and ends and to bring them back to it

- **Try this:** A smooth, cold worry stone or a piece of soft wood with an interesting texture
- **Try this:** Activities like finger-knitting, sorting out smooth beads, or playing with clay/slime

## DEEP PRESSURE

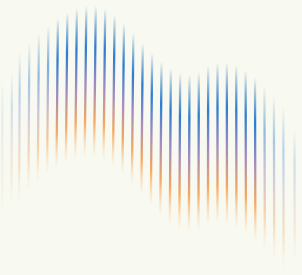


### **The Goal: *Feeling Held***

Giving the brain the “heavy” information it needs to tell the body that it is safe and grounded

- **Try this:** A weighted blanket, a “heavy” soft toy on their lap, or sit them in a big, squishy, comforting, beanbag chair
- **Try this:** “Wall Pushes.” By pushing as hard as they can against a wall, they can “feel” their muscles and joints, which is calming

## SIGHTS & SOUNDS



### **The Goal: *Quieten the Room***

Dial down the “noise” of the world around them so that they can focus on just feeling calm

- **Try this:** A playlist of steady, rhythmic songs with a slow beat on noise-cancelling headphones
- **Try this:** A “Glitter Jar” or a slime timer. Watching the glitter or slime slowly sink helps the mind to get in touch with that “settled” feeling

As your child returns to feeling safe and grounded, you will notice a beautiful change in their body. Maybe a big sigh or a shiver as the stress leaves the body, a younger smile with a softening of the jaw and eyes, and the ability to make soft eye contact again or find their words.

## FURTHER EXPLORATION

Some great books you may wish to explore on your own or with your child:

**“Anchored” by Deb Dana** is a beautiful, friendly guide to gain an understanding of your nervous system

**“The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog” by Bruce Perry and Maia Szalavitz** is a collection of heartbreaking stories full of hope about how children heal

**“Brain-Based Parenting” by Dan Hughes, Jon Baylin and Daniel Siegel** is a great guide to understand the science of why your child’s brain does what it does, and offers some practical assistance to all parents and strategies to develop the parenting brain

I hope this has been helpful for you

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