

Sensory Regulation Strategies

Understanding Sensory Processing

Sensory processing refers to how the brain receives, interprets, and responds to sensory information. Autistic individuals often experience sensory input differently—either more intensely (hypersensitive) or less intensely (hyposensitive). Understanding your unique sensory profile can help in developing strategies to manage daily life more comfortably.

Common Sensory Triggers

Identifying personal sensory triggers is the first step in effective regulation. Some common triggers include:

- **Sound:** Loud noises, repetitive sounds, sudden changes in volume
 - **Light:** Bright or flickering lights, fluorescent bulbs
 - **Touch:** Tags on clothing, certain fabric textures, unexpected touch
 - **Smell:** Strong perfumes, cleaning products, food odors
 - **Taste:** Certain textures, temperatures, or strong flavors
 - **Movement:** Balance issues, dizziness, need for more or less movement
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Practical Coping Strategies

Here are some techniques to help regulate sensory input:

For Hypersensitivity (Over-Responsive to Sensory Input):

- Use noise-canceling headphones or earplugs in loud environments.
- Wear sunglasses or use dim lighting to reduce light sensitivity.
- Choose soft, tag-free clothing and weighted blankets for comfort.
- Use unscented or mild-scented personal care products.
- Take breaks in quiet, low-stimulation areas when overwhelmed.

For Hyposensitivity (Under-Responsive to Sensory Input):

- Incorporate movement breaks (jumping, stretching, rocking) into your routine.
- Use strong flavors, crunchy foods, or temperature contrasts to stimulate taste.

- Experiment with different textures to find preferred sensory experiences.
 - Engage in deep pressure activities like weighted blankets or tight hugs.
 - Use fidget tools or chewable jewelry for additional input.
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Creating a Sensory-Friendly Environment

- Designate a quiet, safe space for decompression.
 - Control lighting with warm, adjustable bulbs or blackout curtains.
 - Organize spaces with minimal clutter to avoid visual overwhelm.
 - Provide options for different textures, seating, and movement needs.
 - Use calming sounds (white noise machines, nature sounds) to balance auditory input.
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Tools & Resources for Sensory Regulation

- **Noise-canceling headphones** (e.g., Bose, Loop Earplugs)
 - **Weighted blankets or lap pads**
 - **Fidget tools and sensory-friendly jewelry**
 - **Chewing gum or crunchy snacks** for oral sensory input
 - **Compression clothing or vests** for deep pressure
 - **Calming apps** like Calm, Insight Timer, or white noise apps
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Sensory regulation is a deeply personal process, and what works for one person may not work for another. Take time to experiment, adapt, and find strategies that bring the most comfort and balance to your daily life. 💙