



Learning Services

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“Sensory Diet”: Supporting Optimal Regulation

- A scheduled activity plan designed to meet a person’s specific regulation needs.
- It is called a **diet** because it occurs across the day **AND** includes big/longer “**meals**” and little/short “**snacks**”.
- Everyone has a unique formula to help their nervous system maintain optimal regulation.
- Individual must explore and identify successful sensory tools to help create the most effective “sensory diet”.
- **Frequency** (how often), **duration** and **intensity** of input must also be considered for each individual.

“Sensory Meal” Ideas

Examples of “**sensory meals**” include activities that occur less frequently for a minimum of 10-15min. Things like:

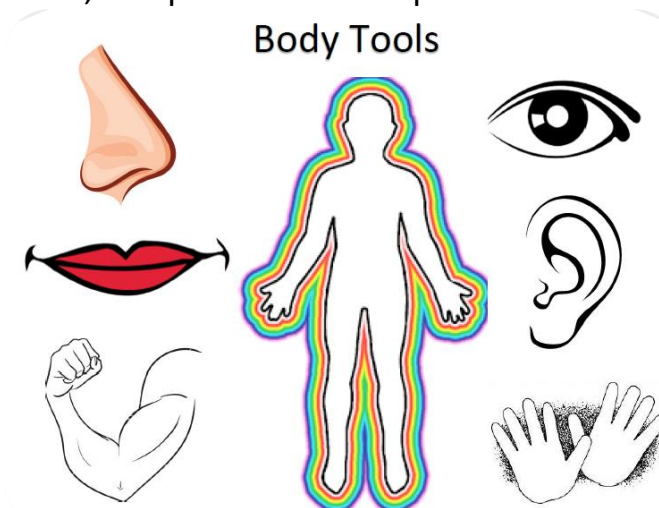
- Running around the school for 10min with the whole class or individually
- Movement breaks throughout the day with the whole class (yoga, dance break, GoNoodle etc.)
- Playing at the playground (climbing, swinging, hanging)
- Access to the sensory room to expend energy in a positive manner (10-15min/day)
- Jumping on a trampoline or swinging on the swings
- Going for a swim 1-3 times per week for 30-60min
- Bike riding or other moderate to intense physical activity 30-60min (every day!)
- Martial arts or gymnastics or other preferred sport (1-3X/week)

*One comprehensive “sensory meal” should fill up our regulation tank with supportive coping chemicals that regulate us for at least 60-90 minutes.
If an individual is extremely stressed the effects will not last as long.*

“Sensory Snack” Ideas

Examples of ***“sensory snacks”*** include activities that are used for 2-5 minutes and can occur as often as needed throughout the day to ***“top up”*** our regulation tank. Things like:

- ***Hand tools*** - access to fidgets like theraputty, soft fabric square, squishy balls or an uninflated balloon filled w/ sand or flour while sitting at desk/carpet listening to a story or instructions.
- ***Mouth tools*** - like chewing gum or chewelry, sucking/sipping on a straw to drink water from water bottle, blowing bubbles, eating crunchy foods, pausing to take 5 slow deep breaths.
- ***Body tools*** - like a weighted lap pad, floor or ball chair, a short walk to get a drink of water or outside for some fresh air, or it may be a seated isometric exercise (ie. chair push up) or doing a few yoga poses (to alert or calm).
- ***Eye tools*** - put your head down for 2-3min, turn out the classroom lights for 5 minutes, read a book for a few minutes, complete work in a less busy environment (study carrel or different room).
- ***Ear tools*** – listen to calming or alerting music for 5 minutes, wear a pair of noise canceling headphones, complete work in a quieter work area.



Try ***“snacks”*** to break up:

- Heavy thinking, sedentary or socially demanding activities. [ie. 5 min academics; 2 min ***“sensory snack”***; 5 min academics]

*Alternating challenging/un-preferred activities with ***“sensory snacks”*** can help ***“reset”*** the body/brain connection allowing recovery from a perceived stressor which in turn should improve frustration tolerance.*