

Creating a Sensory Bag

Children's Occupational Therapy Services



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The idea of a Sensory bag is that if the child starts to become stressed, agitated or anxious due to sensory input or overload, the 'sensory bag' can be used to provide a sensory approach to help calm the child and manage the arousal state or behaviours.

Initially most children will need to be directed to use the sensory bag, but the aim is for the child to know when they need to use it and to use it independently.

The other aspect of the sensory bag that is useful is that it will give clues as to which sensory activities most help the child to stay calm and regroup. For example, if the child often chooses to blow on the oral motor toy then taking five deep breaths may work well as a calming tool. Or if the child often chooses a deep pressure activity such as "pushing the wall" or jumping or stomping on the footprints, then s/he may respond well to heavy work as a calming tool.

Keep the objects in a bag for those children who enjoy the surprise of reaching in and finding something. For those children who are tactile defensive they may need to see what they are touching and a clear zipped pouch, pencil case or shoe box might be best.

While each child's "bag" should be based on his or her individual sensory needs, here are some suggestions that may help you get started:

- Something to squeeze - stress balls, etc.
- Two footprints that can be put on the floor for jumping or stomping on
- Lotion with one of the more calming scents, such as vanilla
- Two handprints that can be placed on a wall as a deep pressure "push place"

- A write-on, wipe-off board and dry erase markers
- An unbreakable mirror so the child can see his or her emotions
- Words or pictures to help the child begin to identify these emotions
- Natural smells
- Therapy putty, silly putty or other 'slime' or 'gloop' to shape.
- Mouthing toys such as blow toys, harmonica, chew toys, chews
- Food items like boiled sweets, liquorice. Lollipops to suck and crunch on.
- Fiddle toys such as hair bands, key rings, bracelets
- Small toys with movable parts
- Stretch toys such as Koosh balls and bendable rubber toys
- Fabric swatches
- A beanie baby type of tactile toy



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