OT GUIDE TO

Attention and Concentration in the Classroom

01

Sit still and pay attention

- We tend to think if children sit still they will pay attention
- Children can either sit still **or** pay attention
- They need to move to get sensorimotor input in order to pay attention

02

Listen to our children

- Children have an innate ability to guide us to empower them
- Optimal state of arousal - alert, communicative, confident, energetic and enthusiastic

03

Timing of activities

- Can be done prior to homework or in between subjects in the classroom
- Other activities can support self regulation while engage in academic or other tasks.

04

5 ways to stay alert

1. oral motor
2. move
3. touch
4. look
5. listen
6. develop a sensory diet

05

Levels of self-regulation

- Automatic functions - respiration, digestion, temperature
- Children choose sensorimotor strategies - not consciously learned or produced
- Higher level cognitive skills, problem solving and self monitoring

Staying Alert Activities

01 ORAL MOTOR

Oral motor input has a critical role to play

- Attention
- Improves posture
- Supported airflow for speech
- Helps develop visual skills

Sometimes we eat for self-regulation, not because we are hungry

*A*lerting foods -
crunchy, cold, spicy, sour, minty

Calming foods -
warm, smooth, sweet

Non-food items -
flexible neck straws - heavy work to jaw
sipping or sucks on water bottles throughout the day

Heavy work, including jaw and cheek muscles - helps with calm and alert

Staying Alert Activities

02 MOVEMENT

Movement is the most common tool for regulation

To remain alert our bodies crave different types of movement, varying degrees of intensity, different times of day

- Move in morning, after lunch, after work
- Movement activity before homework
- Heavy work, up and down, front and back, upside down, crash and bump and circles.

Calming - slow, rhythmical and linear
Alerting - fast, arrhythmical, rotatory

Heavy work is both calming and alerting

In school -

- Individually or as a group
- Start with heavy work - carrying, pushing, pulling
- Stand up and sing/dance as a class to wake up our bodies
- Try use a focused end product, such as a puzzle or maths question

Periods of movement with periods of concentrating

Types of seating

Disco-Sit
Move N Sit
Therapy Ball
T Stool
Standing desk

Staying Alert Activities

02 MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES

Up-down activities
- see-saw
- jumping jack
- playing hopscotch
- sitting on a therapy ball
- marching to music
- pogo sticks

Front and back -
- swinging
- rocking chair
- see-sawing with partner
- playground slide
- soccer
- ice skating

Crash and bump -
- not naughty - intense need
- jumping into a pile of pillows
- jumping into pool
- rugby tackles
- bumper cars
- pillow fights

Weight bearing
- tug of war
- pushing walls
- push ups on chairs
- carrying heavy books or boxes of paper

Circles activities
- merry-go-round
- sit n spin
- twirling
- dancing
- ice skating
- summersaults
- tumbling
- cartwheels
- rolling in a barrel
- lying over therapy balls
- office chair
- circular slides

Without an appropriate sensory diet the brain goes into sensory deprivation - causing difficulties with attention

Staying Alert Activities

03 TOUCH

Items we put in our hands we call fidgets

Adults may use many strategies in lectures - children often get into trouble

Fidgets
- Inexpensive
- Noiseless at school

Novelty -
- The brain seeks novelty to stay alert
- Fidgets may work some parts of the day but not all day or every time
- Novelty can make a fidget work initially but then wear off.
- Some like the comfort of the same one.
- If you take a fidget away, a child will find another
- Fidgets are trial and error

Brain toys -
- Put together a basket to allow children to choose or give everyone the same fidget
- Observe it's use to see if it is working

Fidget suggestions -
- koosh balls
- small slinky
- infinity cube
- colourful paperclips
- rubberbands
- hair scrunchies
- soft fabrics
- marble fidget
- smooth stones
- small stuffed animals

Staying Alert Activities

04 LOOK

Visual input can include -

Variation in light

- Natural light versus artificial lighting
- Dim lighting versus bright lighting

Variation in colour

- Walls painted a bright colour versus pastel colour
- Classroom bulletin boards decorated with brilliant red orange and yellow colours versus muted brown, beige and rose colours

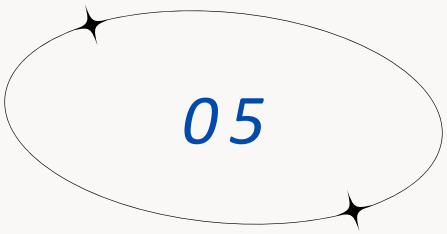
Variations in the amount of visual distractions

- Visually cluttered room versus sparsely decorated room

Suggestions

- open window after a movie in a classroom
- watch a fireplace
- watch fish tank
- watch sunset/sunrise
- watch 'oil and water' toys.

Staying Alert Activities



LISTEN

Auditory input can include -

Variations in noise level

- Loud music versus quiet music
- Screaming versus whispering

Variations in rhythm

- Fast versus slow music
- Arrhythmical versus rhythmical music

Variations in amount of auditory distractions

- Quiet working environment versus noisy working environment
- Sudden unexpected sounds versus constant background noise (clock ticking)

Suggestions

- listen to classical music
- hum
- work in quiet room
- work in noisy room

OT GUIDE TO

Calming Activities

When you feel hyper aroused or feel an increased activity level

for older children/adults

- Create a time out space
- Avoid rushing and hurrying - plan ahead
- Invest in heavy bedding to settle down at bedtime or stack pillows on top of the duvet for more pressure
- Read soothing bedtime literature or play soothing music
- Follow a warm bath with a towel rubdown
- Avoid videogames, exercise and excitatory television before bedtime
- Heavy work patterns can help you to calm down - jog slow and rhythmically.
- Use low-level lighting
- Listen to quiet music
- Rock in a rocking chair
- Massage
- Listen to your favourite music
- Sing to yourself

Alerting Activities

When you feel lethargic or feel an decreased activity level

for older children/adults

- Eat chilled grapes or chew on crushed ice
- Have a midmorning or afternoon crunchy snack - fruit, crackers or nuts
- Use bright light where you work
- Jump on a trampette
- Hit a boxing bag
- Ride fast on a skateboard / swing
- Swim in cold water
- Take a cool shower
- Drink ice water
- Splash cool water on your face and neck
- Play wrestle with someone
- Ride a bike
- Play loud, fast paced music
- Run up a flight of stairs or go for a fast run
- Bounce on a therapy ball or sit on it, at your desk
- Chew on gum
- Sing to yourself

Sensory

Senses give us information about the physical conditions of our body and the environment around us.

Sensations flow into the brain like streams flowing into a lake.

The brain must organise all of these sensations if a person is to move, learn and behave.

Sensory input can increase a child's -

- ability to concentrate
- ability to organise
- self-esteem
- self-control
- self confidence
- academic learning ability
- capacity for abstract thought and reasoning

The following handouts will provide examples of typical behaviours associated with difficulty in modulating different sensory systems. if these behaviours interfere with everyday life it may be worth seeking further assessment from an occupational therapist.

OT GUIDE TO

Sensory Behaviours

01 TOUCH

Tactile system

Under reactive

- Fumbling or grasping objects, drops items very often
- Clumsy or immature pencil grip
- Clumsy eating
- Don't feel that clothes are uncomfortable when put on incorrectly
- Don't recall where a bruise came from

Over reactive

- May appear to over-react to unexpected touch (may accuse someone of hitting them, when they brushed past them)
- Struggle with hair brushing, teeth cleaning
- May find proximity of other people anxiety provoking
- May not like how clothes feel against their skin
- May not like certain food textures

Sensory seeking

- Fidget a lot
- Skin to skin contact
- Put things in the mouth - chew things

Sensory Behaviours

02

PROPRIOCEPTIVE SYSTEM

Proprioceptive system

Under reactive

- May be clumsy or bump into things
- May not be aware of how much force they are using - push too hard or not enough
- May have difficulty maintaining posture

Sensory seeking

- Seek play / activities involving banging, kicking, shaking, hanging from things, pulling or pushing
- When giving someone else a hug, may hug too tight or for too long
- Typically seek out rough and tumble play
- Looking for banging, crashing, rough play
- May use too much force in play

Sensory Behaviours

03

VESTIBULAR SYSTEM

Vestibular system

Under reactive

- May have poor balance
- May not notice that they are falling or put their arms out to save a fall

Over reactive

- Head movement can cause sea sickness
- Don't like their feet off the ground
- Babies get distressed when rocked or moved around
- Dislike being swung
- Avoid playground equipment
- May take longer than others to be able to walk up and down stairs.
- Get travel sickness

Sensory seeking

- Choose activities with a lot of head movement, bouncing up and down, rocking, spinning, moving around in a way that the head changes position against gravity.

Sensory Behaviours

04 VISUAL SYSTEM

Visual system

Under reactive

- May walk into objects or people
- May have injuries because does not notice visual cues in the environment

Over reactive

- Find light too bright. very aware of lighting, turns down lighting or uses sunglasses.

Sensory seeking

- Would be attracted to environment and objects that are shiny, flickery or bright.

Sensory Behaviours

05

AUDITORY SYSTEM

Auditory system

Under reactive

- Slow to respond to sounds or miss sounds
- Slower response to new environmental sounds

Over reactive

- Irritated or anxious about non-threatening sounds in the environment
- May feel overwhelmed with sounds in crowded spaces

Sensory seeking

- Would seek loud noise, loud music, banging sounds.

OT GUIDE TO

Sensory Behaviours

Alerting and Calming Sense

ALERTING	JUST RIGHT	CALMING
tickles	touch	deep pressure
big body stretches	proprioception	pushing against resistance
quick movements that change position of head	vestibular	slow, rhythmic movements
bright lights, computer screens	sight	low lighting
loud music with strong beat	hearing	whale sounds
spicy foods	taste	tastes associated with relaxation
peppermints	smell	lavender

YOUR GO TO

Classroom Seating

DISCO-SIT

Disc'o'Sit is a portable, inflatable, active and dynamic seating solution

Price - £22.99

MOVE N SIT

An air-filled seat wedge that is similar to sitting on a Gym Ball. The wedge shape and unevenness of the cushion adds an element of instability. Promotes active sitting.

Price - £24.99

T STOOL

The stool allows students to wobble, move, and wiggle just as their bodies need, while reading, writing, learning, and listening!

Price - £72.00 - £95.00

STANDING DESK

- Improves focus and attention
- Improves lesson & learning outcomes
- Improves quality of handwriting
- Allows movement

Price - £199 +VAT

YOUR GO TO

FIDGET TOYS

KOOSH BALL

Extremely soft, rubbery and tactile.
Children love the tactile input the Koosh Ball provides.
Bright and colourful, soft and stretchy, great to fidget, explore and experience!

price - £13.19 (pack of 6)

SMALL SLINKY / TACTILE TANGLE

Tangles are great for use in the classroom as:

- Learning aids
- Creative play (storytelling, shaping into different shapes & colours, puzzle)
- They are a great fidget too!

Price - £8.70

MARBLE FIDGET

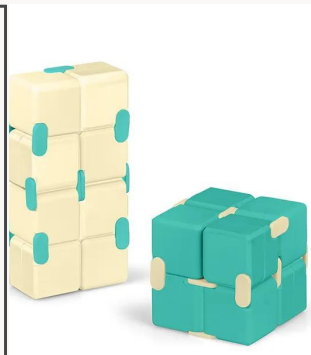
This small fidget has a marble inside of a net pouch that can be moved from side to side. Also the net materiel provides good tactile sensory feedback.

Price - £10.99 (20 pieces)

INFINITY CUBE

- Playable with one hand
- Release stress
- Avoids nail biting, knuckle cracking, leg shaking and other fidgeting habit
- Improves focus by a simple flip and fold.
- Relaxing, noiseless, compact and tactile

Price - £4.99



MOON HALL GUIDE FOR

A Dyslexia Friendly Classroom

01 HANDOUTS

- Use a dyslexia friendly font – e.g. Comic Sans
- Use one and a half learn spacing and size 14 font
- Consider using coloured paper and buff backgrounds on PowerPoints
- Write in numbered steps or bullet points or use different colour fonts
- Ensure that all the correct information that is needed is on the handout
- One sided, so that pupils do not need to flip between pieces of text, which can overload the memory.

02 PHYSICAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- Dyslexic pupils should avoid copying from the board – and have handouts or notes provided for them
- Enough time should be given for pupils to be able to read material – or it should be read to them. The use of Assistive Technology should also be considered. This reduces the stress of having to read and understand at the same time.
- Distractions need to be controlled – visual and noise. A calm and quiet learning environment.
- Classrooms need to be de-cluttered from mess and unnecessary resources

A Dyslexia Friendly Classroom

03 ASSESSMENTS

- Assessment should be through a variety of methods where possible, not just written work. An assessment does not need to be formal or written.
- Assessments should be carried out over a number of occasions using a variety of methods.
- Students should have access to exam access arrangements, where possible, for class assessments, e.g. extra time, a reader, a scribe, rest breaks.
- Reading aloud should always be voluntary – NEVER ask a pupil to read aloud unless they are happy to

04 ASSISSTIVE TECHNOLOGY

- **Reading Pen**
- Text Help
- **Immersive Reader**
- ORCAM

05 SEQUENCING OF INFORMATION

- All information given with a lesson should be organised in a logical and appropriate sequence.
- The objective of the lesson should be shared at the beginning, e.g. what is being learnt today
- Information and instructions should be given in small chunks – and backed up with visuals/ written down
- Information / instructions should be repeated if necessary, making sure that a student does not feel bad for asking for clarification

06 HIGHLIGHT KEY POINTS:

- Identify by colour or symbol important/ key points on hand outs/ notes
- Consider using a colour coding system for pupils, e.g. green for new information, blue for a fact to remember and pink for a skill to master
- Try and clarify vocabulary and check understanding- repetition and over-learning help dyslexic students to recall.
- Try creating word lists at the beginning of a topic.
- Create index cards with important phrases or facts

A Dyslexia Friendly Classroom

07

DYSLEXIA TRAINING

MADE BY DYSLEXIA

SEE DYSLEXIA DIFFERENTLY

A Dyslexia Friendly Classroom

08 LINKS

Touch Typing

KAZ - Free touch typing - KAZ-type.com

Assistive Technology

Orcam

Texthelp

Classroom Techniques

BDA - Dyslexia friendly style guide

LinkedIn

Helen Ross

Andrew Kitley - the invisible gift

Darren Clark - succeed with dyslexia

Paloma Forde - CPD training provider, dyslexia support

Websites

British Dyslexia Association

Succeed with dyslexia

Made by dyslexia