

## SENSORY & MOTOR STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT REGULATION

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Sensory input is cumulative over time and may affect your child differently at different times depending on his or her state of arousal. Children with regulatory difficulties often have more extreme and varied responses to the sensory events of daily activities. Generally, deep pressure is calming, though this may not be true for your child. Discovering and respecting your child's individual preferences and needs is important.

- **Use nurturing touch.** Mindful touch supports connection, trust and safety. It can provide calming input but can also trigger negative emotional responses. A firm, gentle touch and massage touch is often more calming than a light, tickly or random touch, which is more alerting.
- **Deep proprioceptive input through the body can bring arousal to an optimal state.** Pushing, pulling, jumping, climbing, crawling, bouncing, squishing between pillows or play wrestle can increase and decrease the level of alertness depending on the initial state of arousal.
- **Movement can have a long-lasting impact on the nervous system and can be both calming and alerting.** Slow, linear, rhythmical, predictable movement (rocking, swaying, swinging back and forth) tends to be calming. Irregular, rapid, rotary and fast movements are more alerting.
- **Children who seek intense movement can become over aroused and disorganized if the movement is not playful.** Directing actions into games and including deep pressure input helps with organization. Daily participation in active physical play also supports health, organization and regulation including sleep. Examples include: swimming, karate, horse-back riding, yoga, hiking and variety of playground activities.
- **Oral sensory input can be very regulating.** Crunchy foods tend to be alerting; chewy foods are more organizing; sweet can be calming; and sour is more alerting. Odors can also be alerting and calming. See feeding recommendations if there are persistent differences with restricted diet, taste, texture, temperature. Many children with sensitivities will have difficulty with the multisensory aspect of mealtimes including: the others talking and chewing, smells, tastes, mixed foods on the plate, etc.
- **Auditory input can be extremely difficult to moderate if your child is over-responsive to sounds.** Be aware of times that may be too busy or noisy and protect your child from these experiences or choose a quieter time to grocery shop, go to the mall, restaurant, etc. Soft rhythmical sounds or noise cancelling headphones may be helpful. A quiet space or hide out can be great for calming.
- **Set aside a time to play one-on-one with your child each day.** Spend this time following your child's lead and joining his or her play rather than using this time to "teach" skills. Your child will come to anticipate and look forward to this time with you. He or she will learn to identify internal states and ways to manage arousal and attention through your sensitive and responsive care and play, and the predictable daily routines you establish.

See list of additional resources below.

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## RESOURCES

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- Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense, by Ellyn Sater, revised ed. 2000
- How to Get Your Child to Eat ....But Not Too Much, by Ellyn Sater, 1987
- The Out-of-Sync Child: Recognizing and Coping with Sensory Integration Dysfunction, by Carol Stock Kranowitz , 2nd Ed.2007
- Raising a Sensory Smart Child, by Lindsey Biel and Nancy Peske, revised ed. 2009,
- Raising Your Spirited Child, by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka
- Sensory Integration and the Child, by A. Jean Ayres, 25th Anniversary Edition, 2005
- Sleepless in America: Practical Strategies to Help Your Family Get the Sleep it Deserves, by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka, 2006
- Understanding Regulation Disorders of Sensory Processing in Children: Management Strategies for Parents and Professionals, by Pratibha Reebye and Aileen Stalker, 2008