SENSORY ROOMS THAT MAKE SENSE

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AND MY SENSORY BUNCH

DO YOU NEED A SENSORY ROOM?

Possible reasons to consider a sensory room:

- Individuals whose current sensory needs are not being met
- Anticipate welcoming more families with sensory needs
- Communicates our preparedness to care for an individual with sensory needs
- More sensory rooms found in the community, why not the church?
- Ultimately: makes the Gospel accessible

TWO PATHS TO A SENSORY ROOM

"Buy as you need"

- Purchase items for current needs
- Cost effective initially
- May not lead to a cohesive sensory room
- May cost more long term
- Items may go unused as families leave

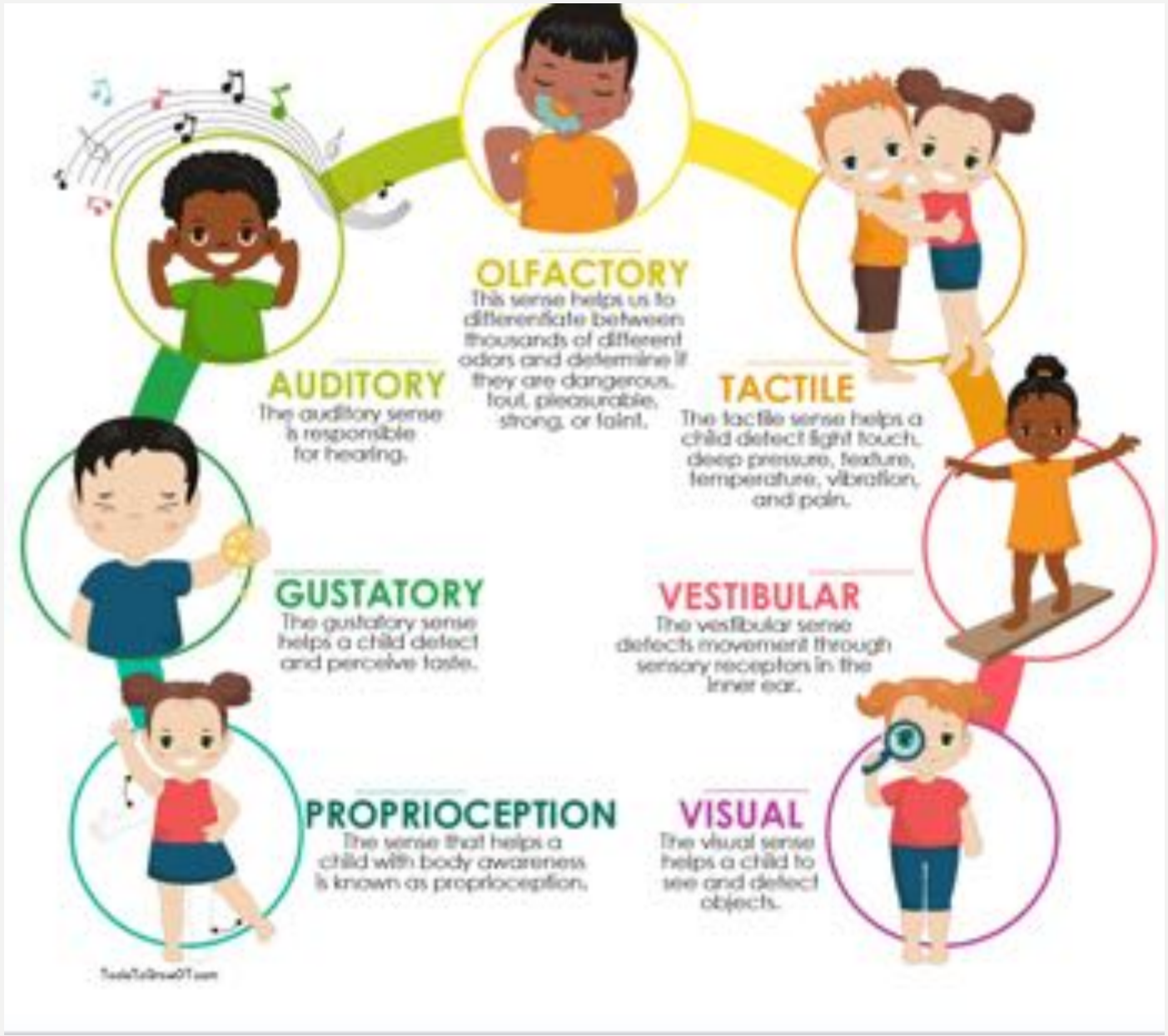
"Buy for every sensory need"

- Create vision for the room that serves your ministry well
- Cost more initially or may take longer to put together
- Overall result will be a cohesive sensory room

WHAT IS YOUR VISION?

SENSORY SYSTEMS

- In order to make wise purchases, know the sensory systems and what sensory seeking/sensory avoiding means for each sensory system
- Think through sensory systems as you make purchases, plan lessons and individualize each individual's experience at church



Source: ToolsToGrowOT.com

PROPRIOCEPTION

Intact proprioception allows a person to determine his/her body's position in space and regulate the direction and amount of force to use when moving. This sense is detected through sensory receptors in the joints and muscles.

SENSORY SEEKING

- Plays rough, often hurting self or others
- Enjoys tight clothing, loud noises, touching others with pressure
- Poor personal space
- Walks loudly, stomps or jumps at inappropriate times

SENSORY AVOIDING

- Extremely sensitive to touch
- Avoids playing with others or cautious when playing
- Avoids climbing, swinging
- Uncoordinated, clumsy
- Likes quiet surroundings

GUSTATORY

Allows a person to discriminate between food flavors and tastes, such as sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and savory. Taste is received through taste buds and receptor cells on the tongue.

SENSORY SEEKING

- Mouth or lick inedible objects
- Chews on clothing or hair
- Excessive drooling
- Messy eater or stuffs mouth
- Prefers variety in taste and texture

SENSORY AVOIDING

- "Beige diet" ie. Chicken nuggets
- Avoids certain textures
- Avoids chewing, uses tongue
- Brushing teeth is a challenge

AUDITORY

Helps us detect the pitch, loudness, and tone of a noise or sound. This sense also allows us to take in the sounds we hear, process them, and create a correct response. It determines if a sound is dangerous and alerting or quiet and calm. This sense is important for listening skills, communication, and social skills.

SENSORY SEEKING

- Likes loud music
- Always uses the "outside voice"
- Makes loud noises in quiet settings
- Places instruments or speakers right next to their face

SENSORY AVOIDING

- Covers ears or hides in social situations
- Has strong emotions as noise level increases
- Has strong reactions to every day noises such as vacuum or toilet flushing
- Sensitivity to high pitch sounds, metallic sounds or sudden unexpected sounds

OLFACTORY

Sensory receptors in our nose pick up odors around us and ultimately sends the information to our brain. Olfactory system is also related to our limbic system which allows us to attach memories or emotions to certain scents or alert us of dangerous scents. Also helps us with tasting foods.

SENSORY SEEKING

- Enjoys strong scents
- Doesn't notice dangerous scents or eats/drinks dangerous substances
- Smells objects and people constantly
- Trouble identifying various scents

SENSORY AVOIDING

- Avoids certain scents
- Has a strong reaction to scents (gags, becomes agitated, frustrated)
- Does not like to be hugged or be close to people
- Avoids public places due to "bad smells"

TACTILE

Tactile system uses our skin to take in information about our environment. Vibration, pressure, temperature, pain, itching are all interpreted through the sense of touch.

SENSORY SEEKING

- High pain tolerance, low impulse control
- Craves vibration, tight fitting clothing, pressure
- May hit, push, pinch others
- Constantly touches items and people around them

SENSORY AVOIDING

- Avoids certain clothing or textures
- Dislikes messy hands
- May walk on toes
- Avoids hugs or physical contact
- Dislikes hair brushing, hair washing, being tickled

VESTIBULAR

Vestibular system coordinates the movement of our eyes, head and body which affects our balance, muscle tone, visual-spatial perception and auditory-language perception. This is based in the inner ear and as fluid shifts in the vestibular organ it sends information about our head and body position in space.

SENSORY SEEKING

- Craves constant movement like spinning, rocking, fidgeting
- Takes unsafe risks, tends to run instead of walk
- Prefers to be upside down
- Unable to sit still

SENSORY AVOIDING

- Can appear clumsy, uncoordinated
- Holds railing on stairs
- Avoids playground equipment
- Dislikes being picked up or turned upside down
- Fearful of elevators

VISUAL

Visual sensory systems uses the eye to take in information and the brain interprets it giving it meaning. This includes details regarding color, three dimensional depth perception, where the object is in space, memory of the image, and gives the image context in the environment.

SENSORY SEEKING

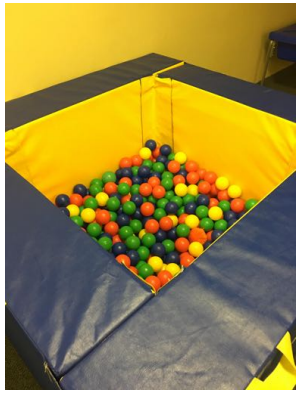
- Stares at bright lights, direct sunlight and flickering lights
- Moves and shakes head frequently
- Seems unaware of new people and environments
- Holds items close for inspection

SENSORY AVOIDING

- Covers eyes or squints
- Rubs eyes
- Avoids bright lights or sunlight
- Frequent headaches or nausea from visual input
- Withdraws in a group during movement based activities

PROPRIOCEPTION

- Weighted blanket
- Trampoline
- Ball pit
- “animal walks”
- Crash pad
- Play dough
- Alternate seating; bean bag chair, lycra/nest swing,
- Include movement in lesson planning for seekers, quiet option for avoiders



GUSTATORY

- Chewlery: think through your policy and disinfecting them
- Sour candy, ice
- Snack choices: variety of textures and tastes
- Gum if a safe option

AUDITORY

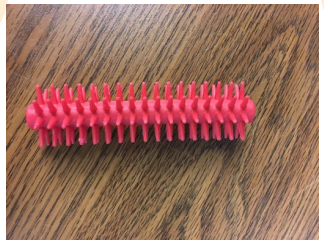
- Noise cancelling headphones/earplugs
- Sound machine
- Music
- Rhymes
- Instruments
- Quiet spaces to retreat to
- Plan for sounds in lessons to meet auditory sensory needs
- Placement of participants in the room

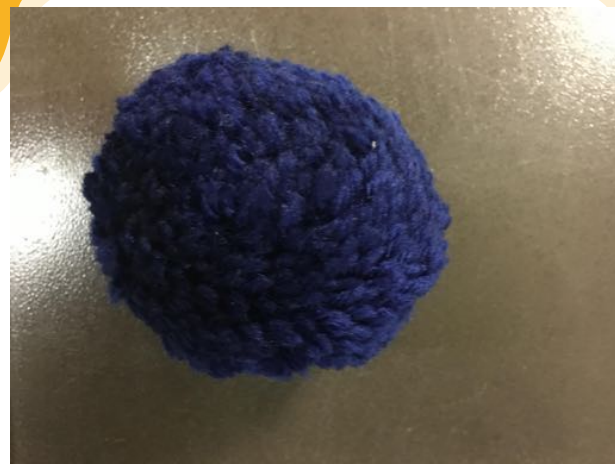
OLFACTORY

- Avoid perfumes in classrooms
- Make scented play dough
- Water table can be used for scented rice, kinetic sand etc if you know a desired scent
- Incorporate scents into lesson plans

TACTILE

- Offer variety of textures to explore
- Fidgets are not a distraction, they allow a person to focus when used properly
- Don’t force participation with play dough, shaving cream etc
- Most people know which fidget works for them, allow choices
- Add tactile experiences into lessons





VESTIBULAR

- CONSIDER TIMING OF VESTIBULAR NEEDS
- HELPFUL TOOLS: SENSA ROCKER, SWING, SIT N SPIN, WOBBLE CUSHION

VISUAL

•Provide visual input to improve ability to participate
•Bubble timers, ooze tubes, pin wheels, lights, sensory bottles, light table
•Incorporate visual interest to your lessons through pictures, lights, word puzzles/mazes

SENSORY ROOM MAKEOVER

SENSORY ROOM ON A BUDGET

SENSORY BOX IDEAS

SENSORY BACKPACK IDEAS

SENSORY BASED CURRICULUM IDEAS

- Hands on Bible Curriculum
- A Sense of the Resurrection: Easter Experience for All Families
- Add movement or ASL to Bible memory verses to include everyone
- Think of our sensory systems when choosing activities
- Get to know your participants and their learning styles
- "Speak" your participants' language: visual schedules, PECS symbols, visual timers, sounds, tactile experiences, movement
- Music is a great tool for variety of sensory needs
- Learn through play; set up station related to the lesson as an opening activity