



BrainWorks Sensory Diet Toolkit

We're so glad you're here! This resource was designed to make sensory support simple, practical, and ready-to-use for parents, therapists, and educators.

Inside, you'll find curated pages from each of our BrainWorks sensory card categories: Calming, Alerting, Just Right, Emotions, and Routine Activities, plus easy-to-follow sensory diet templates and our Quick Start Guide.

Our goal is to help you confidently create and adapt sensory diets that meet the unique needs of your child or client. Whether you're supporting self-regulation at home, in therapy, or in the classroom, these tools give you a clear starting point.

What's Inside:

- Card Samples: Two pages from each card category (Calming, Alerting, Just Right, Emotions, and Routine Activities) to inspire and guide activity choices.
- Sensory Diet Templates: Simple, fillable forms to build and customize sensory routines.
- Quick Start Guide: Step-by-step instructions to help you understand how to select, schedule, and adjust activities.
- Sensory Symptoms Checklist: Our most popular, easy to understand sensory checklist to give you a clear picture of your child's sensory preferences. We have a variety of checklists available here: <https://sensationalbrain.com/free-resources/>

How to Use This Resource

1. Explore the Cards
2. Select Activities
3. Build a Sensory Diet
4. Follow the Quick Start Guide
5. Complete the Sensory Symptom Checklist

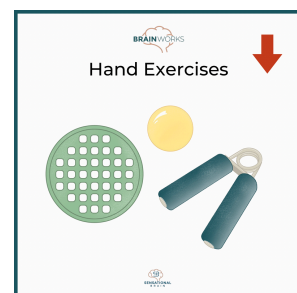
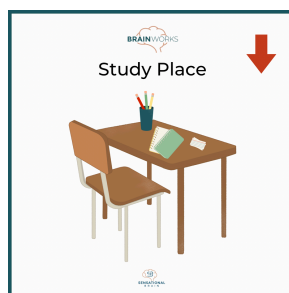
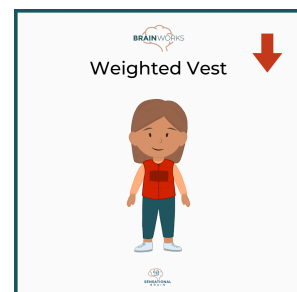
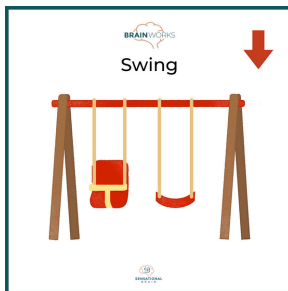
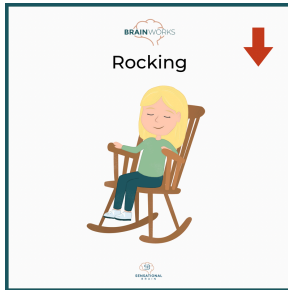
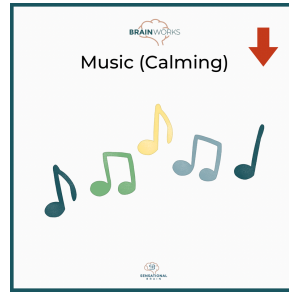
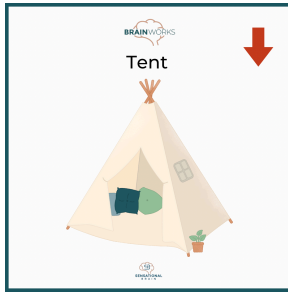
By combining visuals, clear categories, and flexible templates, BrainWorks makes it easier to create sensory diets that actually fit into daily life. This approach empowers children to develop self-regulation skills while giving parents and therapists confidence and clarity. You're on your way to making sensory support simple, engaging, and effective! Join BrainWorks Online to access over 1000 activity cards and other PDF resources! <https://sensationalbrain.com/product/brainworks-membership/>



Activities for Modulation
Small Picture Card Set



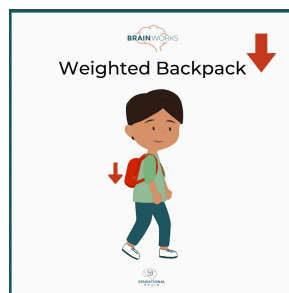
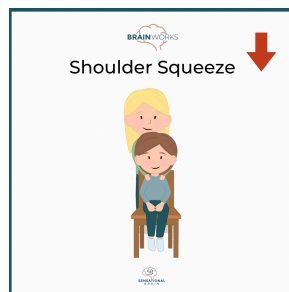
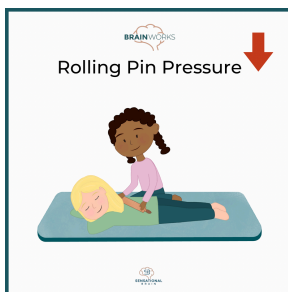
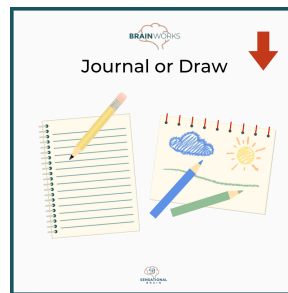
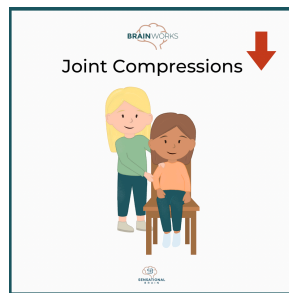
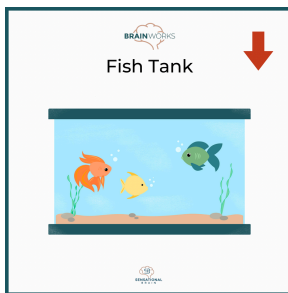
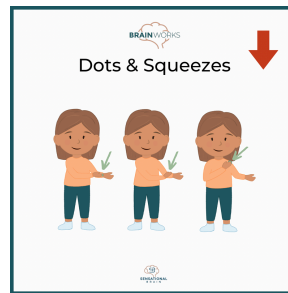
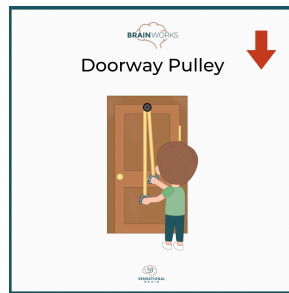
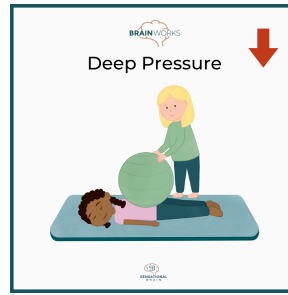
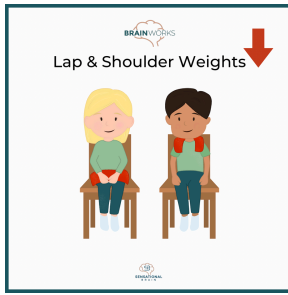
↓ = Calming
↕ = Just Right
↑ = Alerting



Activities for Modulation
Small Picture Card Set



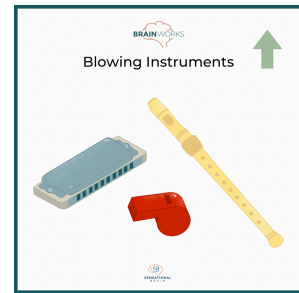
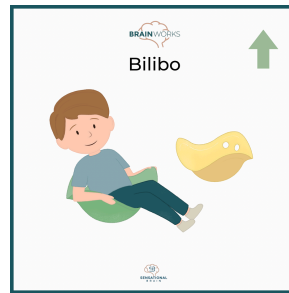
↓ = Calming
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Activities for Modulation
Small Picture Card Set



↓ = Calming
↔ = Just Right
↑ = Alerting



Activities for Modulation
Small Picture Card Set



↓ = Calming
↔ = Just Right
↑ = Alerting

<p>BRAINWORKS Superman ↑</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS Pool Toys ↑</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS Star Jumps ↑</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS Hoppy Ball ↑</p>
<p>BRAINWORKS Face Tapping ↑</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS Mini Trampoline ↑</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS Frozen Foods ↑</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS Gallop ↑</p>
<p>BRAINWORKS Hanging ↑</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS Hop on One Foot ↑</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS Inversion ↑</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS Handstand/Headstand ↑</p>
<p>BRAINWORKS Inversion/Bean Bag Toss ↑</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS Light Touch ↑</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS Log Roll ↑</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS Monkey Bars ↑</p>
<p>BRAINWORKS Pillow Fun ↑</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS Pogo Stick ↑</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS Pull-Ups ↑</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS Scooter Board ↑</p>



Activities for Modulation
Small Picture Card Set



↓ = Calming
↔ = Just Right
↑ = Alerting

<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Gum or Peppermints</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Sit Disc</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Yoga/Pilates</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Desk Theraband</p>
<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Horseback Riding</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Swimming</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Change Positions</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Stability Ball</p>
<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Pressure Push</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Bubble Mountain</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Board Writing</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Animal Walk</p>
<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Army Crawl</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Peanut Ball Plank</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Bear Hug</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Rope Pull Up the Slide</p>
<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Biking</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Bolster Swing</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Bumpy Roll</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS ↔</p> <p>Chair Push Ups</p>



Activities for Modulation
Small Picture Card Set



↓ = Calming
↔ = Just Right
↑ = Alerting

<p>Crawling ↔</p>	<p>Belly on Ball ↔</p>	<p>Music (Just Right) ↔</p>	<p>Sensory Table (rice, beans, sand, water) ↔</p>
<p>Chores ↔</p>	<p>Cross Crawl ↔</p>	<p>Cuddle Swing ↔</p>	<p>Desk Stretches ↔</p>
<p>Crashing Play ↔</p>	<p>Scrub Brush ↔</p>	<p>Vibration ↔</p>	<p>Ball Pit ↔</p>
<p>Net Swing ↔</p>	<p> Scooter Pull ↔</p>	<p>Obstacle Course ↔</p>	<p>Visual Toys ↔</p>
<p>Dig ↔</p>	<p>Figure 8 Walk ↔</p>	<p>Finger Pulls ↔</p>	<p>Finger Push-Ups ↔</p>



Activities for Routines
Small Picture Card Set



↓ = Calming
↔ = Just Right
↑ = Alerting



<p>Getting Dressed: Underwear</p>	<p>Getting Dressed: Socks</p>	<p>Getting Dressed: Shirt</p>	<p>Getting Dressed: Pants</p>
<p>Put on Shoes (without laces)</p>	<p>Put on Shoes (with laces)</p>	<p>Put On Deodorant</p>	<p>Put on Deodorant</p>
<p>Put on Lotion (face & body)</p>	<p>Wash Face</p>	<p>Shave</p>	<p>Getting Dressed: Jacket</p>
<p>Use the Toilet</p>	<p>Flush Toilet</p>	<p>Dry Off With Towel</p>	<p>Dry Hands With Towel</p>
<p>Get out of Shower / Bath</p>	<p>Put Toothbrush Away</p>	<p>Put Toothpaste On</p>	<p>Rinse Mouth</p>

Activities for Routines
Small Picture Card Set



↓ = Calming
↔ = Just Right
↑ = Alerting

<p>Play</p>	<p>Nap Time</p>	<p>Clean Room</p>	<p>Lunch</p>
<p>Deodorant</p>	<p>Brush Teeth</p>	<p>Sensory Break</p>	<p>Snack</p>
<p>TV/Video</p>	<p>Wipe</p>	<p>Wash Hands With Soap</p>	<p>Turn Water Off</p>
<p>Therapy Room/Clinic</p>	<p>Sunday</p>	<p>Monday</p>	<p>Tuesday</p>
<p>Wednesday</p>	<p>Thursday</p>	<p>Friday</p>	<p>Saturday</p>



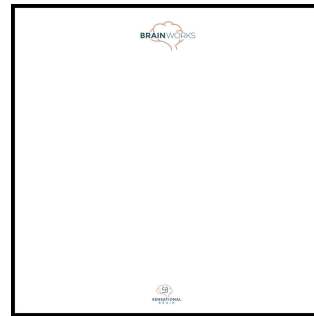
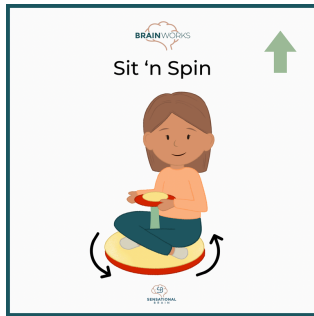
SENSATIONAL
BRAIN

<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Afraid/Scared</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Anxious</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Bored</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Cautious</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>
<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Confident</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Confused</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Disgusted</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Distracted</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>
<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Embarrassed</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Excited</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Frustrated</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Happy</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>
<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Hurt</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>In Control</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Love</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Mad/Angry</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>
<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Nervous/Worried</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Out of Control</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Overwhelmed</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>	<p>BRAINWORKS</p> <p>Proud</p> <p>BRAINWORKS</p>

VISUAL SENSORY SCHEDULE

TO DO:

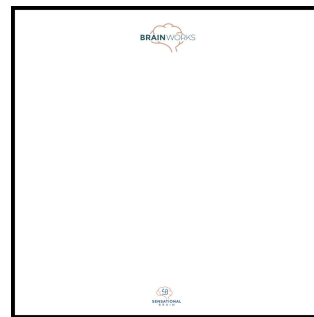
DONE!

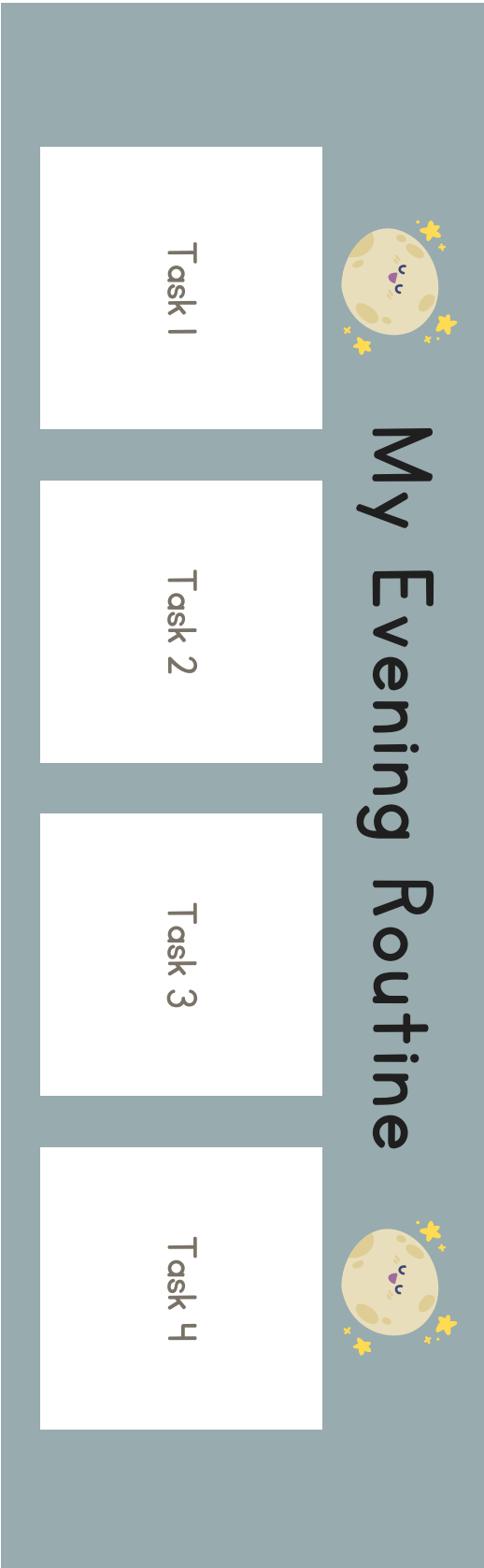


VISUAL SENSORY SCHEDULE

TO DO:

DONE!





My Evening Routine

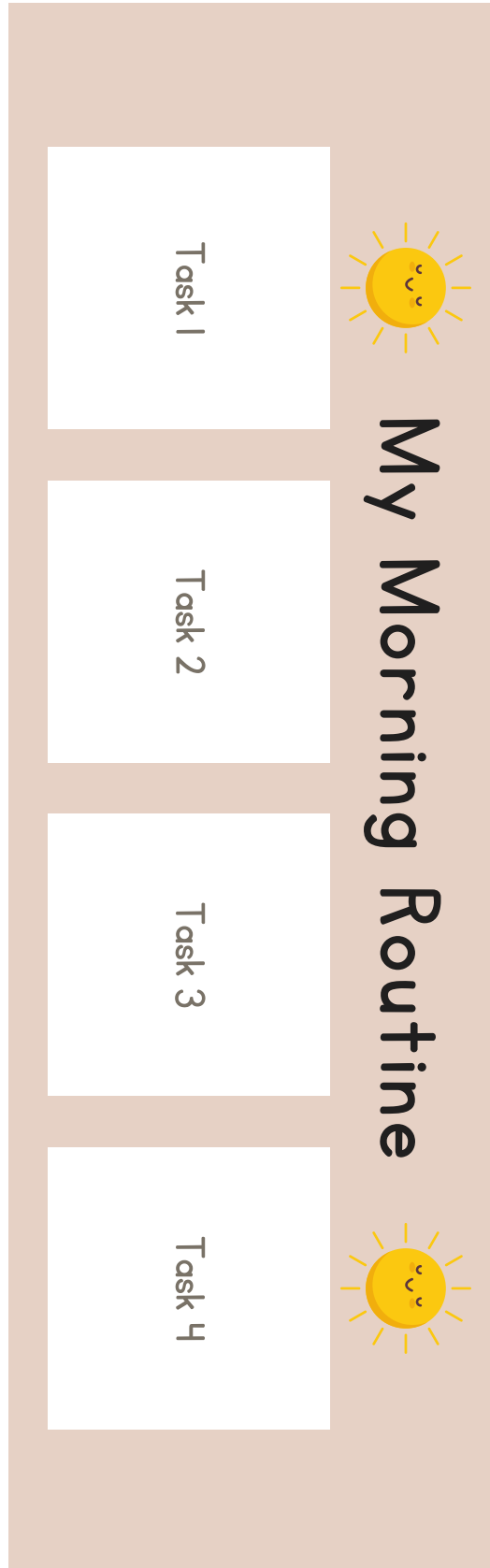
Task 1

Task 2

Task 3

Task 4

This template features a dark blue background with a central title 'My Evening Routine' in white. The title is flanked by two cartoon moon characters with faces and stars. Below the title are four white rectangular boxes, each labeled 'Task 1' through 'Task 4' from left to right.



My Morning Routine


Task 1

Task 2


Task 3

Task 4


This template features a light brown background with a central title 'My Morning Routine' in dark brown. The title is flanked by two cartoon sun characters with faces and rays. Below the title are four white rectangular boxes, each labeled 'Task 1' through 'Task 4' from left to right.




Wake Up Tools



Task 1
Task 2
Task 3
Task 4



Calming Tools



Task 1
Task 2
Task 3
Task 4

BRAINWORKS EMOTIONS

Strategy Checklist



**When I feel tired and I need to wake up,
I can try this strategy to wake my body up:**



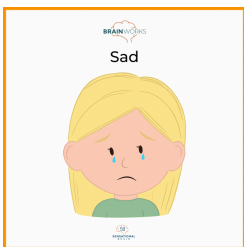
**When I feel surprised, I can try this
strategy to feel calm again:**



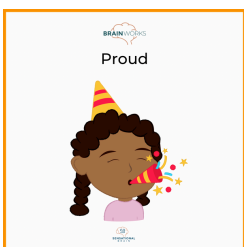
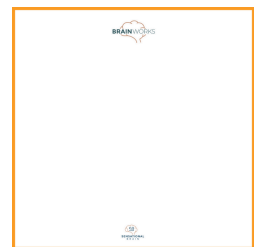
**When I feel silly and out of control,
I can try this strategy to calm down:**



**When I feel sick, I can use this
strategy to feel better:**



**When I feel sad, I can use this
strategy to feel happy again:**



**One thing that makes me feel
proud of myself is:**





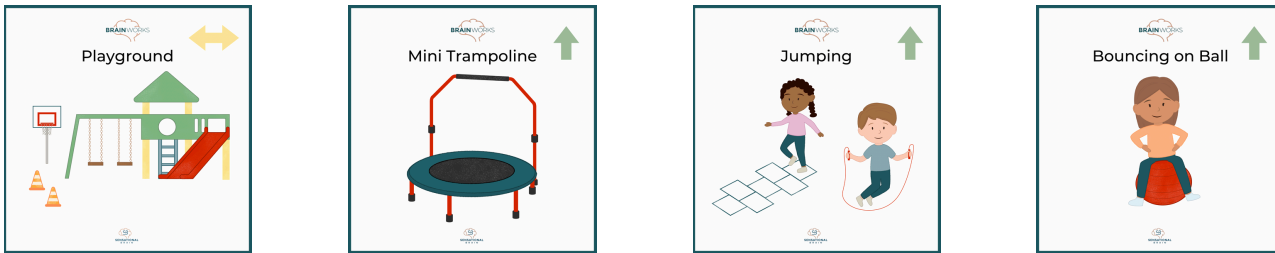
BRAINWORKS EMOTIONS

Strategy Checklist



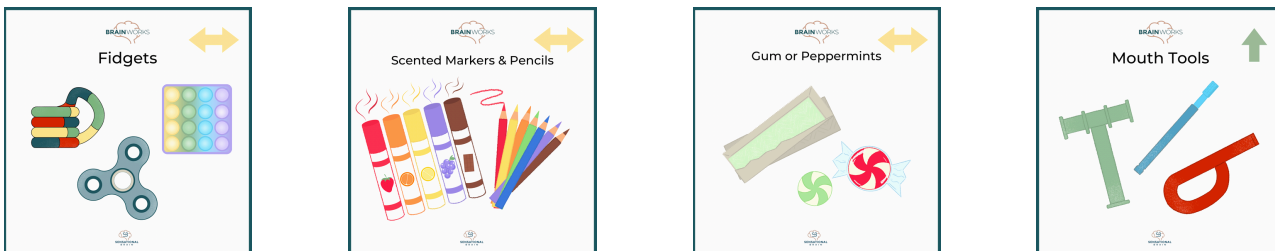
BrainWorks Power Point! Movement fuels the brain. Use activities with green arrows during “Work the Body” breaks and then keep the momentum going with yellow arrow activities during learning time.

BrainWorks Strategy #1: Work the Body



Allow 10-20 minute “WORK THE BODY” breaks for more intense vestibular (movement) and proprioceptive input about every two hours.

BrainWorks Strategy #2: Work the Brain



Use seat-based alerting strategies during learning time.

BrainWorks Strategy #3: Work the Room

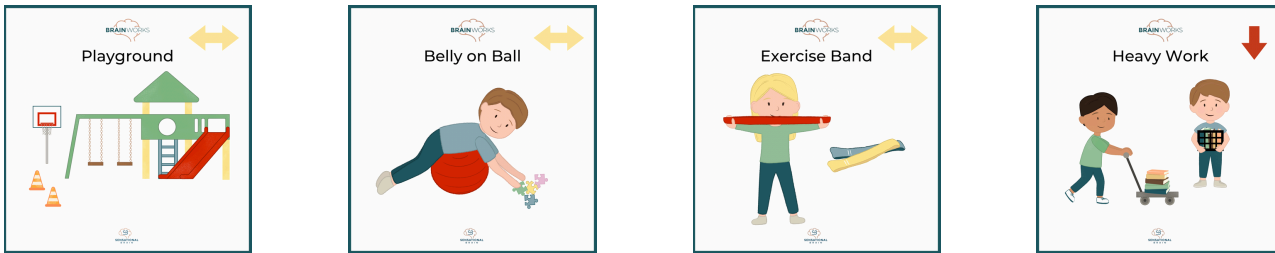


Provide seating near instruction.
Allow standing or floor sitting during work tasks.
Provide a “Study Buddy” to help keep student on task.

Use classroom adaptations to increase alertness while promoting focus and attention.

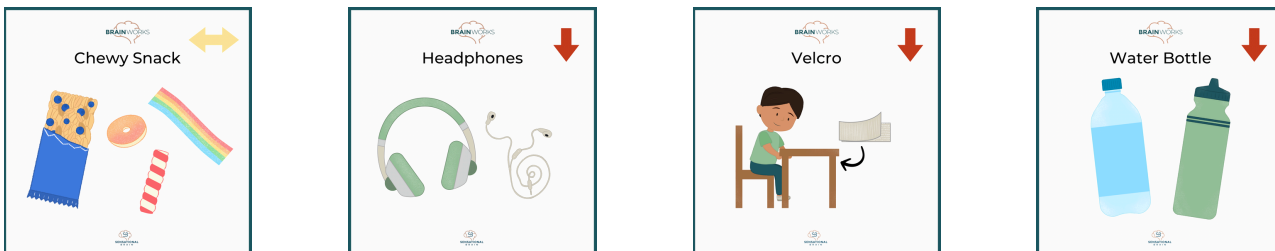
BrainWorks Power Point! Proprioceptive input (heavy work to the muscles and joints) is *calming and organizing*. Choose activities with red or yellow arrows. These will provide modulating input and minimize the sensory demands of the environment.

BrainWorks Strategy #1: Work the Body



Allow 10-20 minute **WORK THE BODY** breaks for more intense “heavy work” input about every two hours (varies with age and cognitive level). Encourage participation in BrainWorks red and yellow arrow activities to help calm and organize the sensory system.

BrainWorks Strategy #2: Work the Brain



Use seat-based calming strategies during learning time.

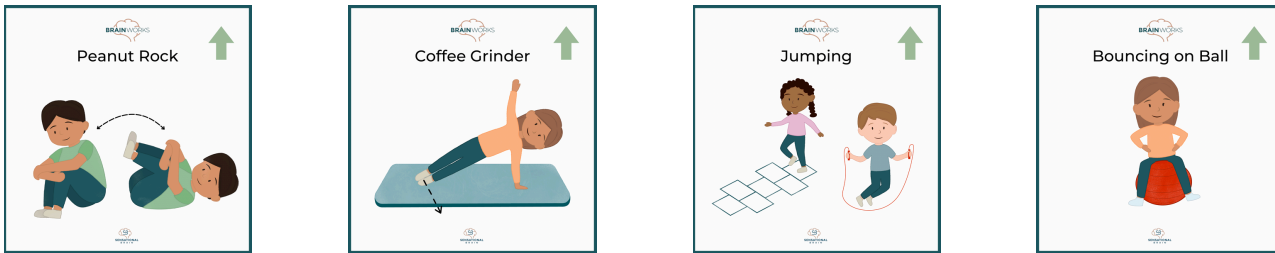
BrainWorks Strategy #3: Work the Room



Use accommodations to minimize over-responsiveness that interferes with learning.

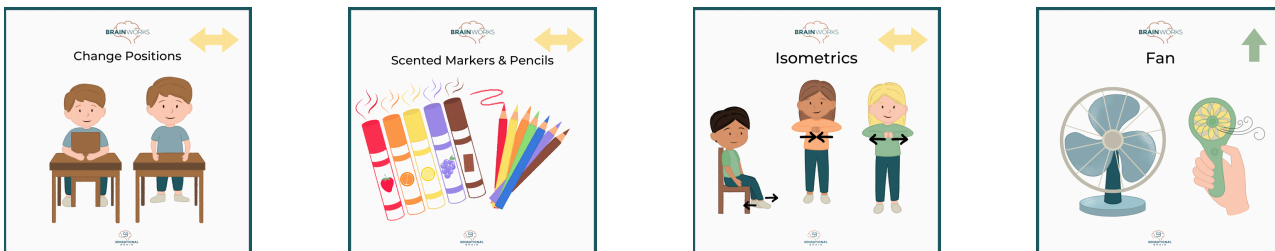
BrainWorks Power Point! Movement fuels the brain. Use activities with green arrows during “Work the Body” breaks and then keep the momentum going with yellow arrow activities during learning time. Remember: Intensity matters!

BrainWorks Strategy #1: Work the Body



Allow 10-20 minute “WORK THE BODY” breaks for more intense vestibular (movement) and proprioceptive input about every two hours. This is the time to provide the green arrow activities to allow the brain to get the intense input it needs.

BrainWorks Strategy #2: Work the Brain



Use seat-based activities that allow movement and sensory input during learning time.

BrainWorks Strategy #3: Work the Room



Provide seating near instruction. Allow standing or floor sitting during work tasks. Provide a “Study Buddy” to help keep student on task.

Use classroom strategies that allow sensory input while promoting focus and attention.

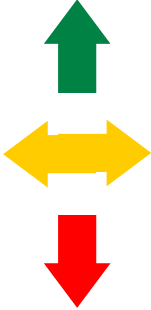


Quick Start Instructions

Creating a sensory diet can be overwhelming at first. All of this is easier with the assistance of an occupational therapist. While there is a lot you can do on your own, a skilled O.T. can give you a more in-depth view of your child's needs and a plan for how to address those needs. In the meantime, here is how you can get started:

1. Fill out the Sensory Symptoms Checklist included in this manual.
2. Now look closely at the results for the “NEAR” senses (TACTILE, PROPRIOCEPTIVE, VESTIBULAR). Are most checkmarks in the left hand column, indicating *over-responsiveness*? If so, your sensory diet will use primarily the calming (red arrow) activities. Or are most of the checkmarks in the right hand column, indicating *under-responsiveness*? If this is the case, your sensory diet will use lots of alerting (green arrow) activities.

Here is an overview of the *BrainWorks* arrow system:

- 
- **Green Arrow:** These activities are best for *under-responders* and *sensory seekers*. These will be alerting for most kids. For the sensory seekers, these activities will help them reach the necessary threshold level for input to be meaningful for their brains.
 - **Yellow Arrow:** These activities encourage focus and attention. These almost always bring both *over-* and *under-responders* to the appropriate level of arousal for learning and productivity. These are “just-right” activities.
 - **Red Arrow:** These activities will help a person slow down or calm down. For *over-responders*, these activities will help the person modulate the sensory input more effectively and feel less overwhelmed.

3. Find the appropriate “Strategy Summary” guide to give you an overview of the appropriate sensory diet. To determine which Strategy Summary Guide to use, look again at the results of your checklist in the “near” senses (TACTILE, PROPRIOCEPTIVE, VESTIBULAR).

4. Now take a look at the templates for sensory diet tool formats and decide which will work best for your child or client.



5. Select the picture cards you need depending on the child's age, sensory needs, and equipment available. ALWAYS choose some "Just Right" picture cards because these are good for everybody, PLUS either the "calming" or "alerting" cards depending on your child's needs).

FOR EXAMPLE: If you have an 8 year old and the "Sensory Symptoms Checklist" reveals that they are primarily under-responsive in the NEAR senses (tactile, proprioceptive, and vestibular), you will want to select some of the "just right" activities AND some of the "alerting" activities.

6. Assemble the Sensory Diet using the template and picture cards you have selected. It's recommended to laminate the templates and cards before use. Place Velcro dots on the template squares. Place the opposite Velcro dots on the backs of the picture cards you have selected.

7. Observe your child before and after they complete the sensory diet. If they are appropriately engaged in an activity, point out that their sensory "engine" is going "just right" at that time. At this "speed," we are able to focus and attend without being easily distracted or feeling too sluggish. If you notice your child is agitated, irritable, hyper, unfocused, fidgety, point out that their sensory "engine" is going "too fast." At this speed, it is hard to think clearly or focus appropriately.

Modify and adjust the sensory activities and/or the order of the sensory activities to achieve the appropriate adaptive response.

For under-responders, this is a time to choose green arrow activities to give them the burst of input they need to reach their sensory threshold. However, for over-responders, this is the time to give them red arrow activities, because their nervous systems are feeling overwhelmed. If you notice your child is sluggish, "zoning out," or just plain sedentary, point out that their sensory "engine" is going "too slow." At this speed, it is hard to get anything done or focus on what is important. This is when green arrow activities are needed to "rev" the engine up. Refer back to the teaching aid frequently until the child fully understands their sensory "engine."





8. Next, look closely at the results for the “FAR” senses (auditory, visual, olfactory, gustatory). For each sensory system, notice if your child is primarily over- or under-responsive. Although most of the sensory activities on the BrainWorks picture cards address the “NEAR” senses, the effects will be modulating to the “FAR” senses as well.

Additionally, we use environmental modifications and adaptations to address the needs of the “FAR” senses.

PLEASE NOTE: Not every child or adult falls neatly into one category (Over/Under-Responsive). If you are left feeling like your Sensory Symptoms checklist leaves you more confused than anything, please feel free to email: Rachel@sensationalbrain.com.

If you need to learn more about setting up an appropriate sensory diet for your child or client, please look into the following view-on-demand courses we have available at sensationalbrain.com.

Sensory Strategies at School: Quick, Equipment-Free Support for Classrooms

RACHEL HARRINGTON, COTA/L, CPRCS

0.2 AOTA CEUS

Effective Sensory Diets: An Evidence-Based Approach

GWEN WILD, MOT, OTR/L

0.2 AOTA CEUS

Meeting Sensory Needs in the General Education Classroom: A Researched-Based Approach

GWEN WILD, MOT, OTR/L

0.2 CEUS

The Proprioceptive System: Activities, Strategies, and Intervention Ideas

RACHEL HARRINGTON, COTA/L, CPRCS

0.2 AOTA CEUS

Developing and Implementing Effective Sensory Diets for Children and Teens

GWEN WILD, MOT, OTR/L

0.5 AOTA CEUS

Simplifying Sensory Diets with Visual Supports

GWEN WILD, MOT, OTR/L & RACHEL HARRINGTON, COTA/L, CPRCS

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Sensory Symptoms Checklist: Home Version

The following checklist is not a diagnostic tool; rather, it is an indicator of sensory over- or under-responsiveness. The purpose of this tool is to assist in developing an appropriate treatment plan and/or sensory diet for an individual with sensory modulation difficulties.

Remember: It is normal for all people to be sensitive to certain sensations. Sensory modulation becomes a disorder only when it negatively impacts a person's life (i.e., ability to pay attention, learn, socialize, relax).

The asterisk (*) indicates sensory-seeking behavior. Sensory Seeking is a form of under-responsiveness, but these individuals seek intense sensation to compensate for the under-responsiveness of their nervous systems.

TACTILE (TOUCH)

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness

- avoids affectionate touch
- bothered by seams in clothing, tags, waistbands, etc.
- avoids messy play including finger-painting and Play-Doh
- dislikes nail-trimming/hair-cutting hair-brushing/tooth-brushing
- limited food preferences, sensitive to food textures
- excessively ticklish
- avoids standing close to others
- startles easily when touched unexpectedly
- overreacts to minor injuries or mosquito bites

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness

- always touching others*
- as a young child, may prefer to be without clothes and barefoot
- doesn't seem to notice messy hands or face
- touches everything, brings objects and toys to mouth frequently*
- may stuff too much food in mouth
- seems unaware of light touch
- doesn't seem to notice cuts and scrapes, doesn't mind shots
- drools, doesn't wipe runny nose
- unintentionally rough on pets or other kids
- craves intense flavors—salty, sweet, sour, spicy, etc.*
- difficulty with fine motor tasks

*Indicates sensory-seeking behavior.



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PROPRIOCEPTIVE (PRESSURE ON MUSCLES AND JOINTS)

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness

Since proprioceptive input is always helpful to the nervous system, we do not see over-responsivity in this category.

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness

- loves jumping, climbing, wrestling, and crashing activities*
- walks on toes or walks heavily*
- difficulty with fine motor tasks
- prefers crunchy and chewy foods*
- sucks thumb or fingers, chews on clothes and toys
- grinds teeth, cracks knuckles*
- loves tight hugs and “squishing” activities or positions*
- chooses thick or heavy blankets
- self-abusive behaviors—pinching, biting, head-banging*
- prefers tight-fitting clothes or may wear a snug jacket constantly*
- uses too much or too little force on objects (e.g., juice boxes, crayons)

VESTIBULAR (MOVEMENT)

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness

- as a baby, dislikes being held away from adult’s body or tossed in air, may be “clingy”
- avoids swings, slides, anything that requires feet to be off the ground
- fearful of escalators, elevators, and all heights
- gets motion sick easily
- dislikes leaning back for hair- washing or floating on back in pool

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness

- as a baby, needs to be rocked a lot, is happiest in stroller, swing, bouncer*
- dislikes sedentary tasks*
- is in constant motion, loves spinning, swinging, being upside down*
- may have low muscle tone (muscles and joints seem too soft and floppy)
- “W” sitting on floor, slumps, leans in chair
- loves spinning, loves amusement park rides, is a “thrill-seeker”*
- rocks self or moves head back and forth while sitting*

*Indicates sensory-seeking behavior.



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INTEROCEPTION (INTERNAL SENSATIONS)

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness

- Seems to have a low pain tolerance
- Displays significant distress when cold after bath or after stepping outside on a hot day
- extreme fear of medical procedures
- frequent complaints of various aches and pains

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness

- difficult to toilet train
- apparent lack of hunger/thirst
- high pain tolerance or shows inappropriate response to pain
- difficulty falling asleep/staying asleep
- doesn't dress appropriately for weather
- doesn't seem aware of symptoms of illness such as sore throat or nausea

AUDITORY (SOUND)

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness

- as a baby, startles easily, cries with vacuum, hair dryers, toilet flushing
- dislikes noisy places
- easily distracted and bothered by background noises
- cries, covers ears with loud or unexpected sounds
- asks others to be quiet

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness

- may not consistently respond to name (rule out hearing loss)
- prefers TV and music to be loud*
- often doesn't notice background noises
- makes own sounds frequently, enjoys silly sounds of others*
- says "What?" frequently even though hearing is intact
- may appear oblivious to some sounds, has difficulty locating sound
- may use self-talk to get through a task

VISUAL

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness

- bothered by bright lights, sun
- dislikes visually busy places (stores, playgrounds, cluttered rooms)
- avoids eye contact
- prefers dim lighting, shade
- rubs eyes a lot, may get headaches from reading

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness

- loves shiny, spinning or moving objects*
- difficulty with eye-hand coordination tasks (catching a ball, stringing beads, tracing and writing)
- loves action-packed, colorful TV shows and electronic games*
- difficulty distinguishing between similar letters and shapes
- difficulty with visual tracking, may lose place frequently while reading

*Indicates sensory-seeking behavior.



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GUSTATORY AND OLFACTORY (TASTE AND SMELL)

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness

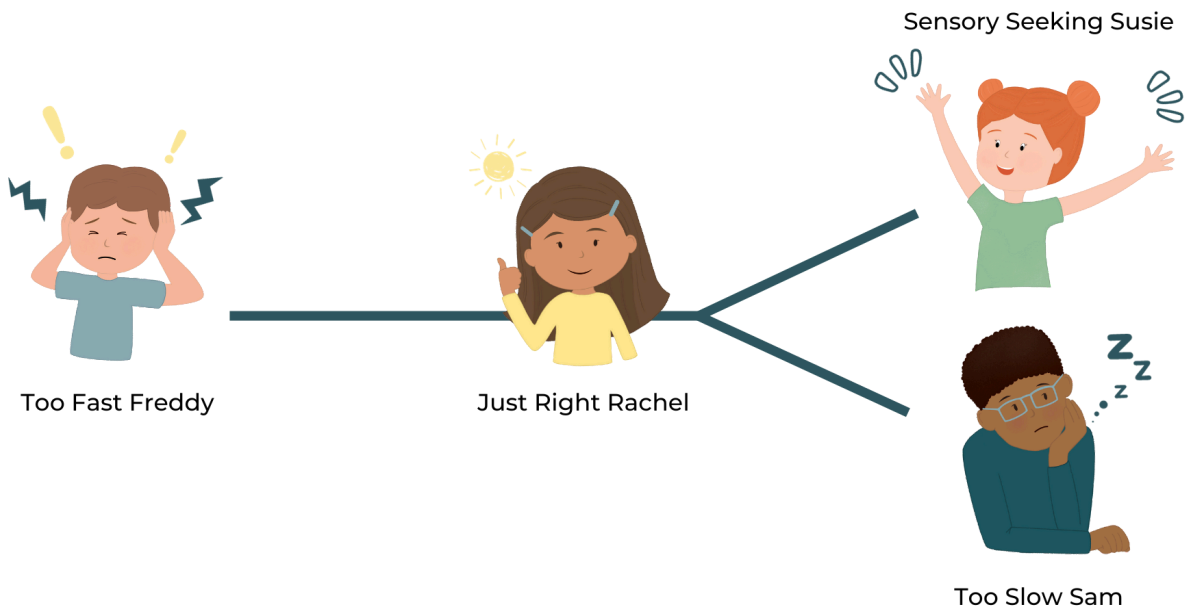
- talks about smell a lot, notices odors others don't notice
- plugs nose, avoids places with strong smells (some restaurants)
- dislikes new foods, may have very limited food preferences

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness

- smells and licks inedible objects such as toys and Play-Doh*
- likes strong odors such as perfume, cleaning products, and gasoline*
- prefers strongly flavored foods—spicy, salty, bitter, sour, sweet*

*Indicates sensory-seeking behavior.

Sensory Modulation Continuum



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Sensory Symptoms Checklists:

