



Sensory Diet Suggestions for Specific Target Behaviors:

Target Behavior: Masturbation

Things to consider: Try behavior analyses to see if there are specific triggers for the masturbation. It might be helpful to use the A-B-C approach (Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence) to analyze the behavior. You may find that the behavior increases during times of stress, or in response to certain settings or environments. If so, think about what accommodations may be helpful. Try to determine whether it seems the client is using this behavior as a self-calming method or an alerting method. Filling out the Sensory Symptoms Checklist found under the FORMS tab at www.sensationalbrain.com will help you make this determination.

From a sensory perspective, masturbation is a very intense form of sensory input. It is quite common for young children to use this as a calming strategy, much like thumb-sucking. Older kids tend to use it more as an alerting form of sensory input. Sometimes masturbation is a way to tune out other things that are overwhelming in the sensory environment. If this is the case, you will need to consider how to decrease the sensory overload as much as possible.

Strategies to decrease target behavior:

Address the social concerns first...

- Read social stories to help the client understand that this is a private activity and should only be done when alone
- It may be helpful to build more bathroom breaks into the visual schedule. The message should be that this is acceptable in private but not in public.
- Use a cue such as “Hands above the desk” to help the child learn appropriate public behavior without calling unnecessary attention to this behavior from other students.



If it appears that the behavior is used for calming purposes, use “red arrow” (calming) forms of sensory input throughout the day such as:

- Offer alternative strategies such as deep pressure through a weighted blanket, a shoulder massage by an adult caregiver, a comfort object such as a blanket or stuffed animal, calming music or videos, etc.
- Consider what can be changed in the environment to promote a calmer atmosphere, therefore decreasing the need for this type of calming input
- If it appears that the behavior is used for alerting purposes, offer “green arrow” (alerting) forms of sensory input throughout the day such as:
 - Alternative seating on a therapy ball or t-stool
 - High-intensity alternatives to walking throughout the building such as riding a scooter, riding a bike, or skipping/hopping
 - Fidget toys on the desk top
 - Green arrow activities during sensory breaks every two hours

Work closely with a behavioral expert to determine if rewards and/or consequences could be beneficial in teaching the client the social appropriateness of this behavior.