



SENSORY EXPLORATION

Purpose & Focus

Allows youth to explore sensory interventions in a safe environment and allows staff to better understand the youth in their care and the interventions that might help them most.

Participants

Any number of participants.

Time Allotment

15 – 30 Minutes

Activity Level

High

Materials

- Selected sensory activity cards on the following pages
- Any items needed to carry out the selected sensory activities
- Check engine plate

Preparation

- In advance, review the sensory activity cards and select some you have the tools for and feel are appropriate for the group.
- Gather the items needed.

Method

- Check energy levels with the check engine plate.
- Talk about ways that youth work to self-regulate now and then introduce some of the activities from the cards.
- Allow youth to try the activity if they choose. Be sure to supervise each youth carefully for any activity that takes balance or coordination.

Discussion

- How did you like these different activities?
- Which of these activities do you think would help you focus?
 - ...Help you get your energy up?
 - ...Help you calm down?
- Do you think any of them might be better for you than others?
- Do you feel comfortable asking for one of these activities if your engine isn't in the green? If not, why not?

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>BOUNCE ON A BALL</p> <p>Allow the youth to sit on a large balance ball and bounce. Stay with them to provide support and protection. Alternatively, they may simply want to sit on the ball during activities or while doing homework, etc.</p> | <p>LISTEN TO MUSIC</p> <p>Ask the youth to check in on their check engine plate then suggest types of music to help. If low, they may want something faster. If high energy, they may want classical or other music with slower beats. 60 bpm is optimal.</p> <p>Pay attention to the reaction to the music to ensure it meets the youth’s needs for self-regulation.</p> |
| <p>WEIGHTED LAP PAD OR ANIMAL</p> <p>Allow the youth to hold the item in their lap or stomach, around their neck to calm, or during a potentially stressful activity or discussion. Youth should ask for, not be issued a weighted item.</p> | <p>WEIGHTED BLANKET</p> <p>Allow a youth who may have anxiety when alone or has trouble sleeping to use this blanket at bedtime or during a nap. Youth should ask for, not be issued a blanket unless the MDT determines that it is critical for sleep and is willing to review and revisit the need over time.</p> |
| <p>FIDGETS</p> <p>Allow youth access to sensory toys, fidgets, playdough, or other items that help to keep them regulated. These should be allowed on request or as personal property unless there is a compelling safety reason (not discipline) to not allow a specific fidget and substitute another.</p> | <p>CALMING ROOM</p> <p>If a youth identifies or you identify that they are “in the red” on the energy plate, they may request or you may offer some time in the calming room. Make sure that they have what they need such as a weighted item, fidgets, music, soft pillows or blankets or other things needed for them to self-regulate and calm.</p> |
| <p>PUT ON LOTION</p> <p>Allow the youth to apply lotion on hands and arms to calm. If available offer a choice of scents.</p> | <p>EAT SOMETHING CRUNCHY</p> <p>Allow youth a snack that is crunchy like nuts, crisp fruit, carrots, etc.</p> |
| <p>EAT SOMETHING SOUR</p> <p>Allow a youth a snack or treat that is sour. Could be a lemon, sour candy, etc.</p> | <p>DO CHAIR PUSH-UPS</p> <p>Supervise the youth while they sit in a chair without arms and using their arms push themselves up and down off and on the chair.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>WHEELBARROW WALK</p> <p>Ask if another youth will assist whom the youth trusts. Have the youth walk on their hands while the other youth holds their feet.</p> | <p>SIT IN A ROCKING CHAIR</p> <p>Allow the youth to sit and rock.</p> |
| <p>JUMPING JACKS</p> <p>Allow the youth to do a series of jumping jacks.</p> | <p>HOPSCOTCH</p> <p>Allow the youth to draw a hopscotch court with sidewalk chalk. This is simply a course or row of single and double blocks. Provide a beanbag or other item to toss. After throwing the beanbag the youth hops through the court, skipping the square where the beanbag is. Single blocks have to be hopped on with one foot and double blocks with both feet.</p> |
| <p>HAVE A LOZENGE</p> <p>Sucking on a lozenge or hard candy can help some youth to focus.</p> | <p>WATCH A LIQUID MOTION BUBBLER</p> <p>This plastic toy has colored liquid inside that drips down and creates patterns. May help some youth to calm or to get to sleep.</p> |
| <p>USE AN ESSENTIAL OIL</p> <p>Allow the youth to test a few scents and select one that seems to appeal to them to either alert or calm them, as needed. To prepare them, place only a few drops of essential oil in a small plastic jar, swirl, add cotton balls, and shake. Label the jars and let the youth pick out a cotton ball to carry with them or sleep with.</p> | <p>WEAR SUNGLASSES</p> <p>Helpful for youth who may be sensitive to bright lights in situations where the lights cannot be adjusted.</p> |