

CHILDREN'S OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPIST'S

SENSORY PROCESSING ADVICE



**Manchester Local
Care Organisation**

Leading local care, improving
lives in Manchester, with you

HELLO!



WHAT WILL BE COVERED

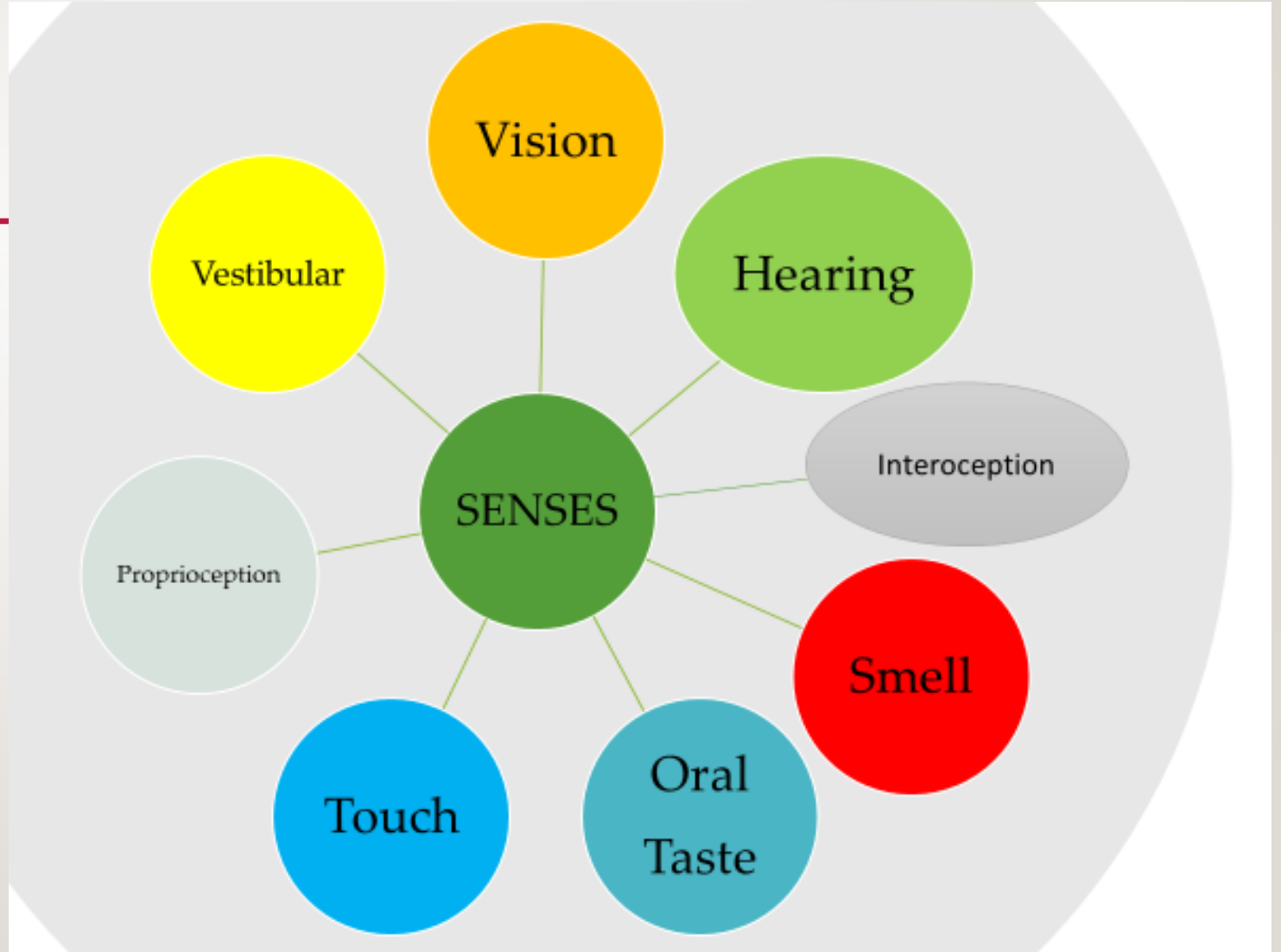
What are Sensory Processing Difficulties?

Understand your own sensory system

What can help?

SENSORY PROCESSING

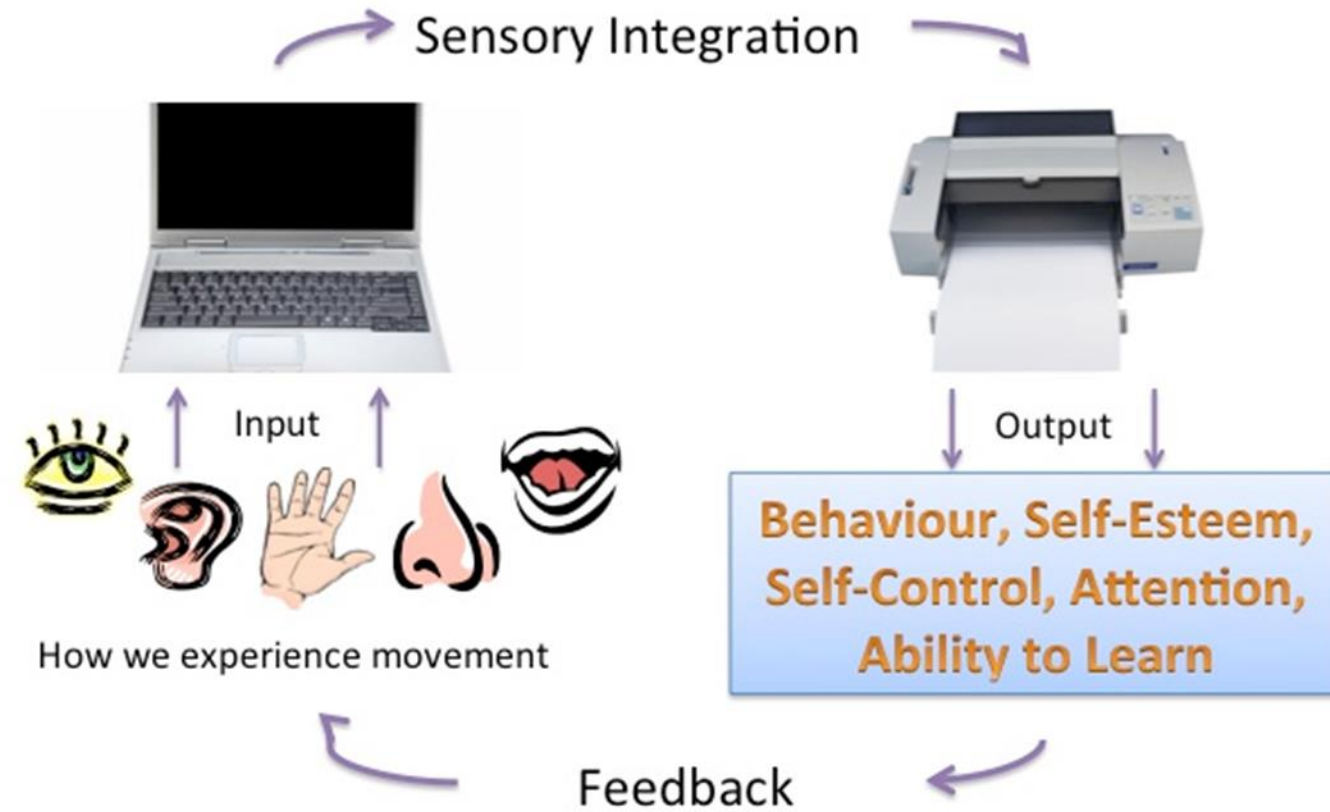
- Sensory – is about the senses – hearing, seeing, touching, tasting, smelling and moving.
- Processing – means understanding and interpreting
- Hidden senses – vestibular (movement), Proprioception (body awareness) & Interoception



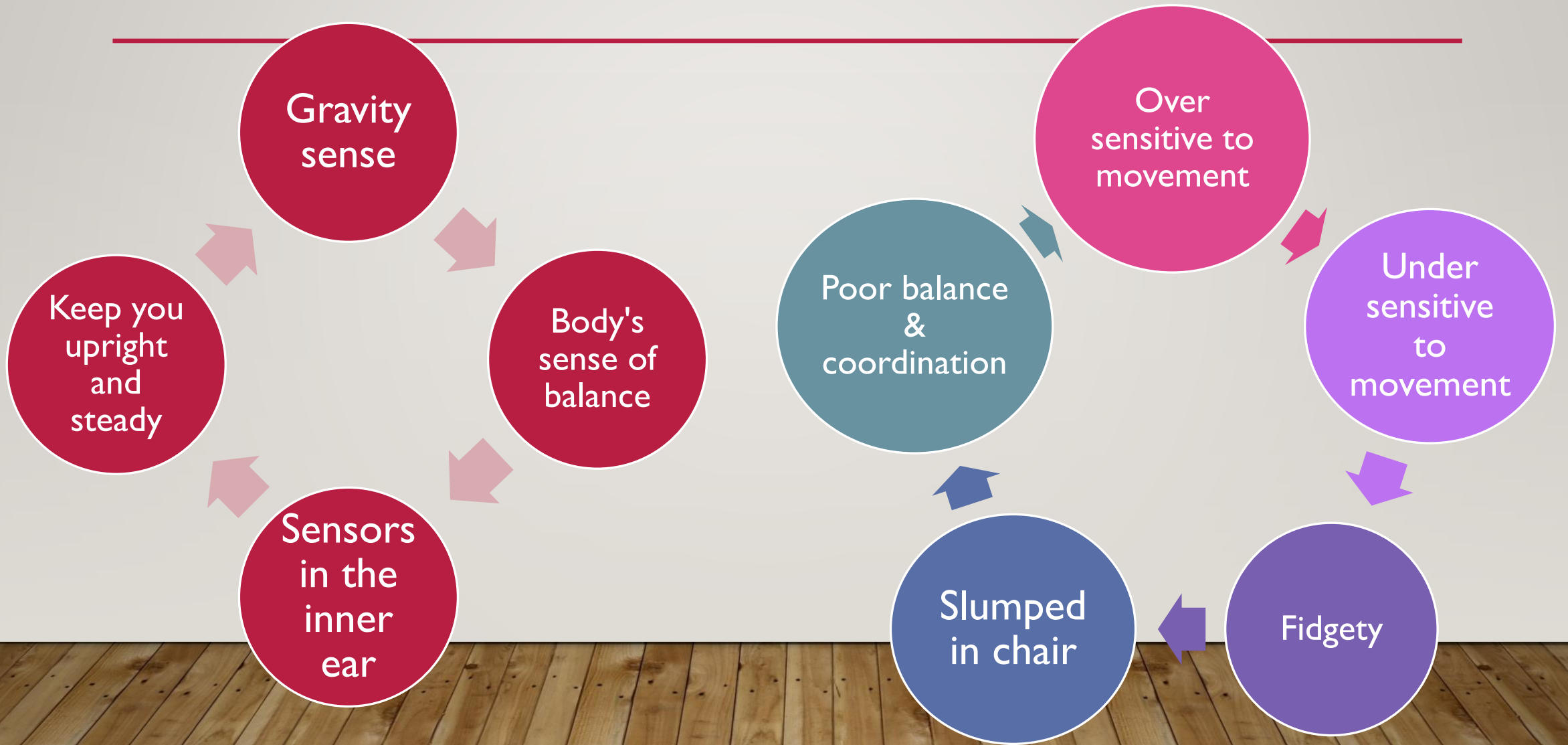
SENSORY INTEGRATION DEFINITION

- “Sensory integration is the organisation of sensation for use. Our senses give us information about the physical condition of our body and the environment around usthe brain must organise all of these sensations if a person is to move and learn and behave normally”
- Ayres 1979

Computer Analogy



MOVEMENT (VESTIBULAR)



BODY AWARENESS (PROPRIOCEPTION)



TOUCH



Skin receptors
cover our body

Light touch

Pressure

Pain

Temperature

Identify objects
through touch only

Touch sensitivity

Seeking touch

Annoyed if someone
brushes past you

Struggle to identify
objects through touch

Clothes feel
uncomfortable

Don't feel pain

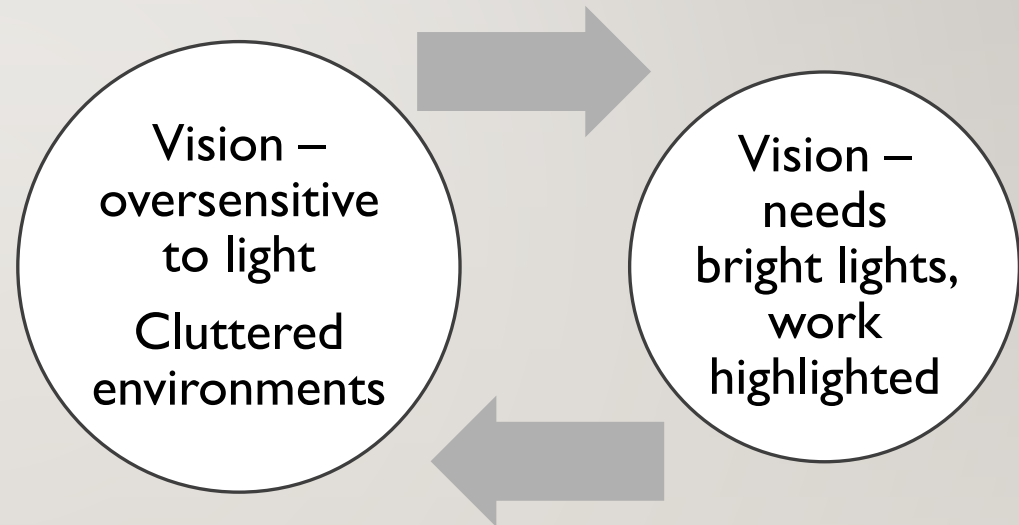
HEARING (AUDITORY) & VISUAL PROCESSING

Not responding to name called

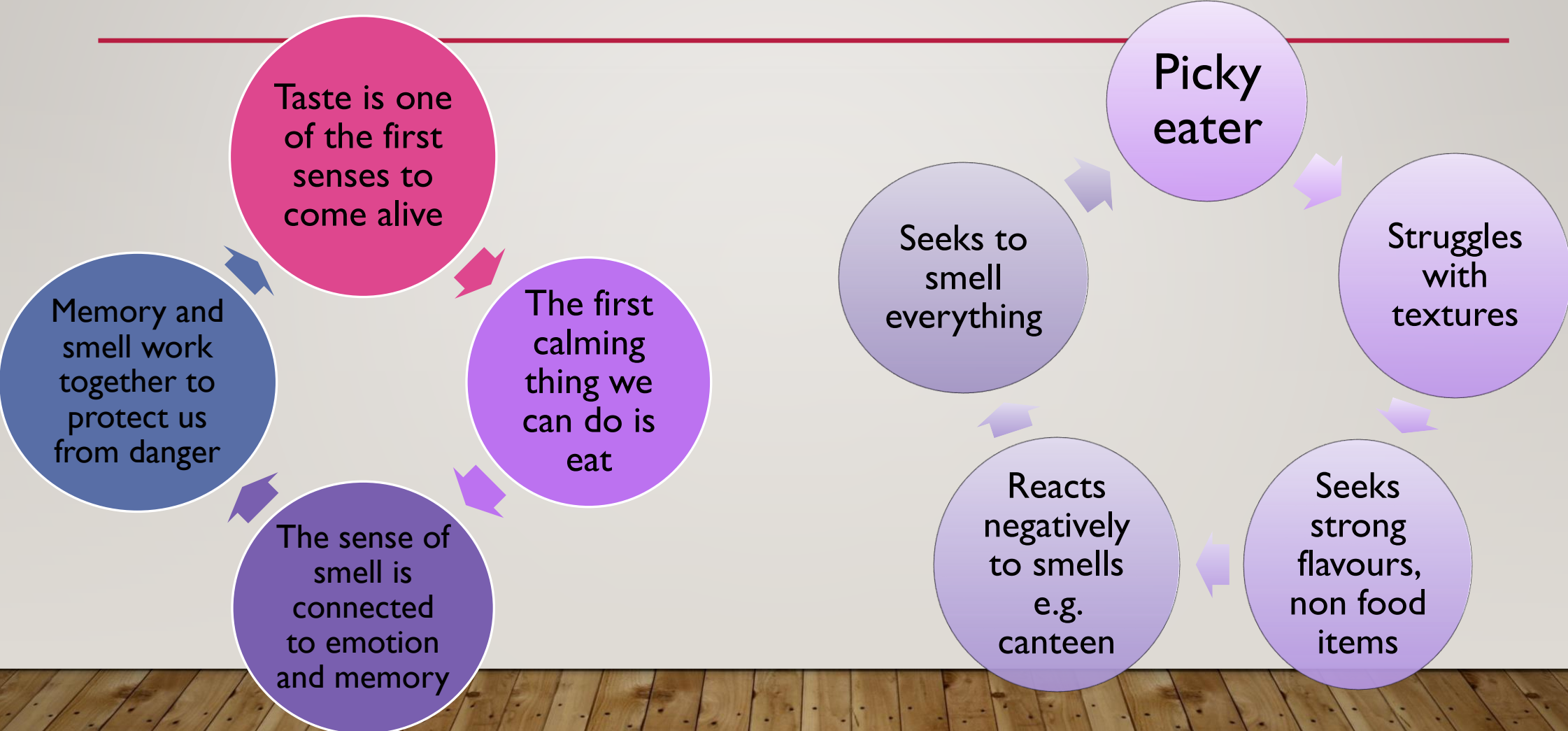
Hands over ears, humming, self talking

Struggles to process verbal instructions

Hard to filter out background noise



SMELL & TASTE



Taste is one of the first senses to come alive

Memory and smell work together to protect us from danger

The first calming thing we can do is eat

The sense of smell is connected to emotion and memory

Seeks to smell everything

Picky eater

Struggles with textures

Reacts negatively to smells e.g. canteen

Seeks strong flavours, non food items

INTEROCEPTION

MESSAGES FROM INSIDE YOUR BODY



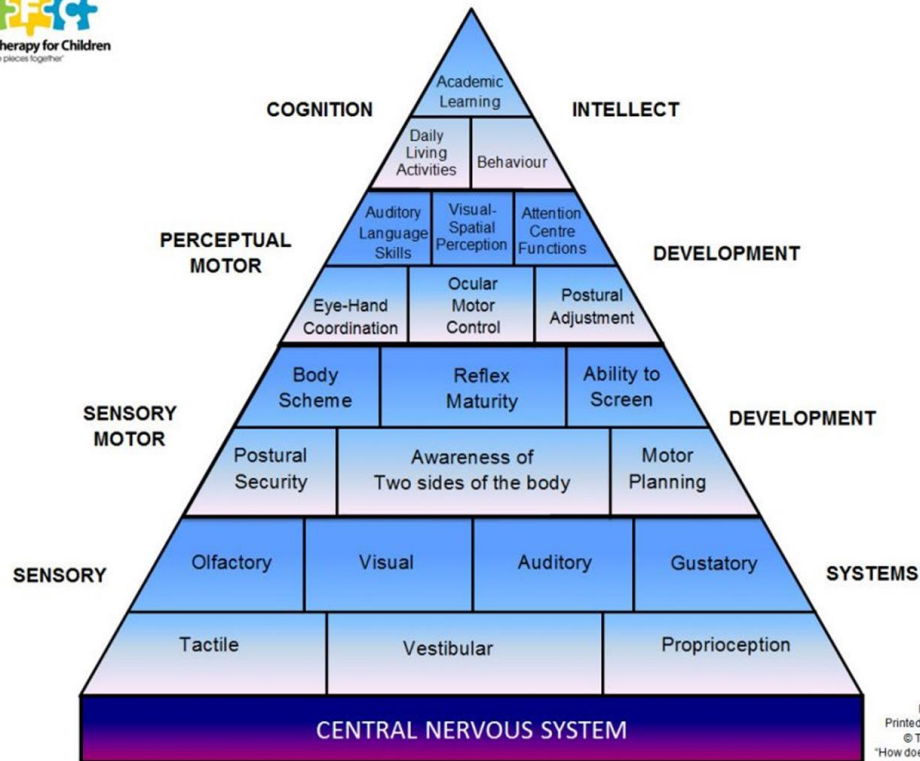


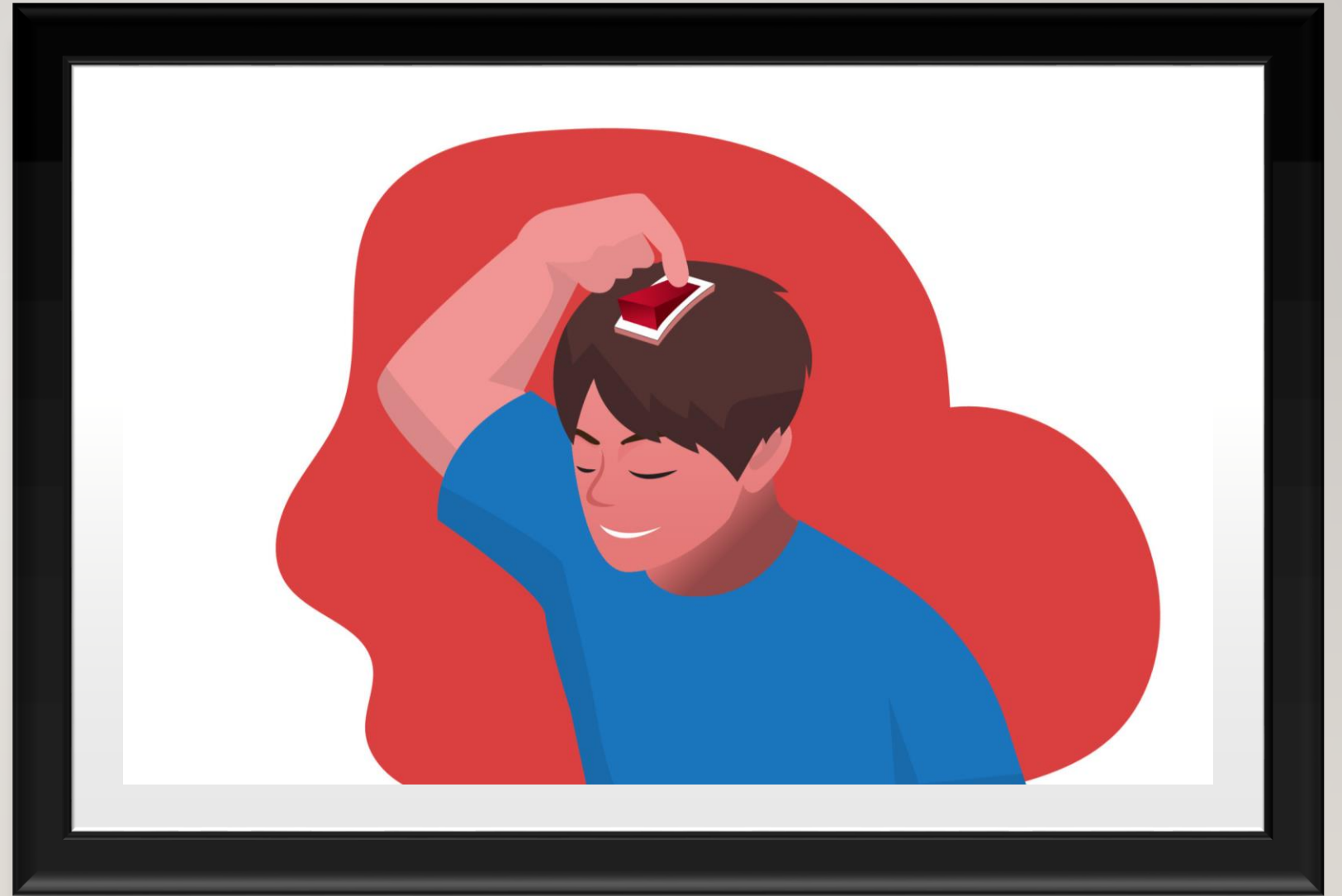
Figure 1-3.
Printed with permission.
© Taylor/ Trott 1-4
"How does your engine run?"

BUILDING UP FROM THE FOUNDATIONS



- You can think of the brain-body as a house that is you.
- The basement of the house is your senses
- Only when you feel safe and solid will you want to climb up to the attic
- You cannot convert the attic without sorting the foundations out first

YOUR ELECTRICAL SYSTEM



LET'S LOOK AT YOUR PERSONAL ELECTRICAL SYSTEM



- Brain and nerves
- Our brains and bodies work together
- Sensory processing difficulties mean that your brain has difficulties understanding some of your senses
- If a house has old electrical wires some of the wires might be frayed and weak and some aren't connected. That will affect how things work or don't work e.g., the lights. The wires are there but there are problems with the connections.

VIDEO FROM THE NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY

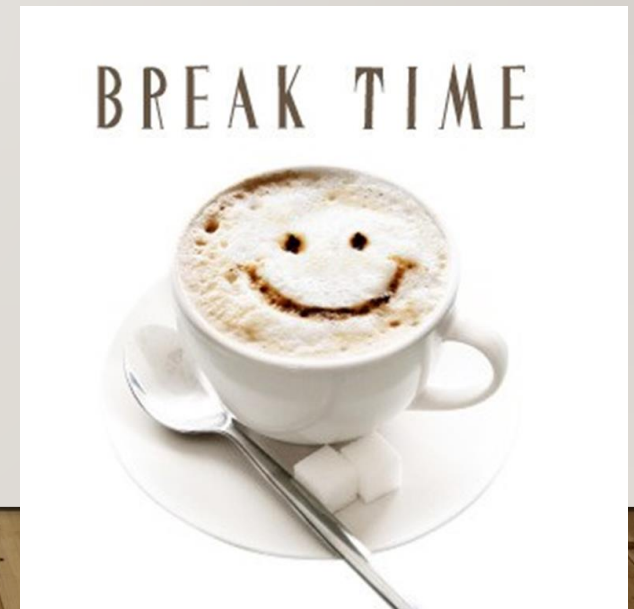
Can you make it to the end?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPknwW8mPAM>



BREAK

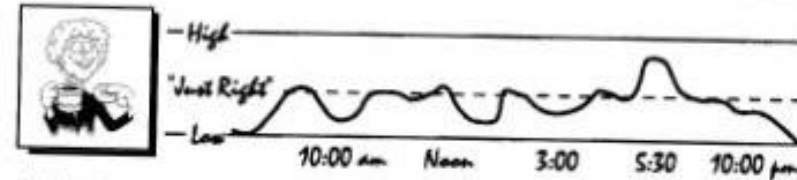
- Please have a look through the Adult Sensory Checklist
- Think about what you do to alert/calm your nervous system
- Follow the instructions on sheet



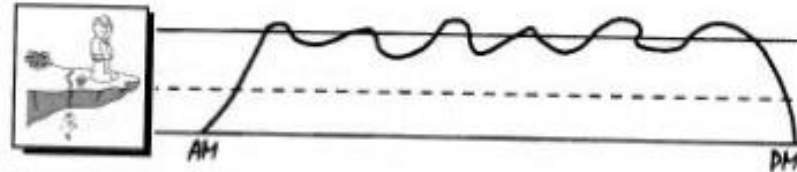
LEVELS OF AROUSAL – ENGINE LEVELS

EXAMPLES OF ENGINE LEVELS

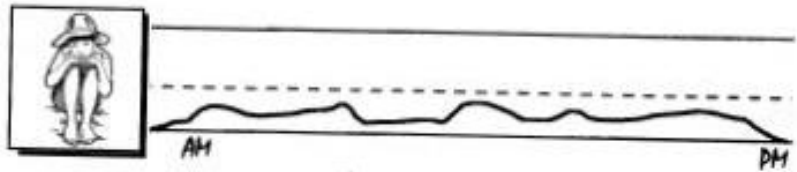
Normal Day (Anne)



High (Paul)



Low (Carl)



**WHAT CAN
HELP?**

HOW CAN WE HELP?

Touch, Movement & Muscle Tools

Vestibular (movement) Processing

Linear movements
Rotational movements
in combination with heavy work.

Proprioceptive (body awareness) Processing

Activities which place stretch on muscles and work against gravity e.g. pushing, pulling, lifting, carrying.

Touch Processing

Usage of a variety of textures in combination with heavy work/deep pressure to desensitise central nervous system

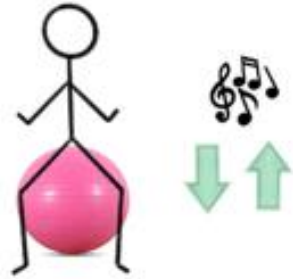
WHAT CAN HELP?

- **Taste**; sour/spicy to alert.
- **Smell**; lavender to calm, mint to alert.
- **Hearing**; white noise to calm, ear defenders.
- **Touch**; deep pressure calming, big hugs, weighted jacket, sleeping bag, lycra clothing, swaddling ie. wrapping in blanket.
- **Vision**; dim light to calm, reduce clutter, clear walls, outlined work.
- **Vestibular (movement)** ; slow linear movement, rocking to calm, fast spinning to alert (be careful this does not disorganise or over alert the child – follow the activity with heavy muscle work) , to reach ‘just right alert level’ ie. therapy ball, swings, running.
- **Proprioception (body awareness)** ; heavy muscle work to organise the central nervous system, push, pull & squeeze ie. Theraband, wall presses, chair press ups, oral prop; sports water bottles, blowing games/bubbles.



Regulating Activities

Bounce to the Tune



Play with the Dough



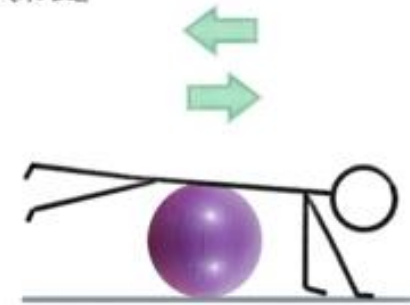
Throw the Koosh Ball



Snack & Chat



Walk the Ball



MOUTH

- Mouth is an organising area.
- Mouth tools can help to improve attention and focus
- Take some ideas from the list and use them to help: relax, pay attention and concentrate
 - Crunchy: apples, low fat pretzels
 - Chewy: chewing gum, dried fruit, bagels
 - Spicy: spicy crisps, cinnamon sweets
 - Sour: green apples, lemon
 - Salty: salted crisps, popcorn, pickles
 - Sweet: smoothies suck from a straw, frozen yogurt tubes, dried fruit
 - Camelbak bite valve drinks bottle
 - Chewy tube, chewigem, vibrating teether



TOUCH – CALMING/FOCUSING

- Focusing

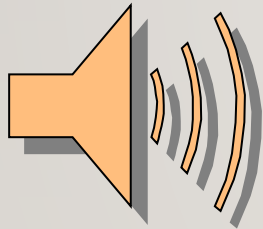
- Many people have found it is helpful to have their hands engaged while concentrating
- Fidgeting with an object can help to stay calm and quiet
- Some teens have found that holding a hand fidget can result in increased ease with maintaining eye contact

- Calming

- Some people have a need for a little more S P A C E
- Ask for a hug
- Wear snug fitting clothing
- Wear a heavy coat
- Wear a heavy backpack
- Gym ball exercises

MUSIC: EAR TOOLS

- Certain music/sounds can be distracting, alerting, energising or calming



- Strategies to aid concentration
 - Silence
 - Consider volume, tempo, absence of lyrics and tempo
 - White noise i.e. running water/waves can help to improve concentration
- Sounds to aid sleep
 - Research has shown that certain music promotes relaxation and quality of sleep
 - White/Pink noise
 - Nature sounds
 - Fan
 - Rain app, Quickshift

MOVEMENT TOOLS

- **Types of Movement and Positions**
- Fast Irregular Movements can be alerting or excitatory
- Slow Rhythmical Rocking can be calming
- Bouncing up and down can be calming and organising
- Body Flexion (being curled up into a ball) can be very soothing and calming
- Body extension (arms straight with head up) can be alerting
- **Using movement and body positions as a way of changing your state are very powerful tools**



MUSCLE TOOLS

- Physical activities are great to add intensity to your 'sensory diet'
 - 'Heavy work' activities using a lot of muscle power may improve attention and help you feel more centred, organised and confident
 - If you are over excited, heavy work calms you
 - When you are feeling 'sluggish', it alerts you
- Try these activities:
 - Walking/Running
 - Stretching – using a resistance band
 - Chair push ups
 - Yoga and balance
 - Gym workouts
 - Swimming



SENSORY ENRICHMENT IN THE CLASSROOM OR HOME

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Reduce clutter
- Soft colours
- Access to fidget toys and other sensory friendly equipment
- Natural light
- Quiet /low stimulus area

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

- Movement breaks
- Daily timetable of activities
- Classroom routine
- Dedicated quiet study time

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

CONSIDER BODY LANGUAGE

- Soft eyes
- A smile
- Gently rocking
- Rhythmic, story-telling voice
- Hands in full view
- Low or crouched

MAKE YOUR FEELINGS EXPLICIT

"You are safe here."

"Let's talk about what just happened, but before we do I want you to know that you are safe here, and I'm right here for you."

"Right now my face might look stressed because I'm just trying to juggle a few things to do with work, it's nothing about what you have said or done."

"I do feel sad and upset that you hit me, and I also still love you very much. It's normal for people to have two different feelings at the same time."

"You might have seen me talking to Sam about what happened. It's important that I keep things safe for everyone and that you know I don't feel cross or angry"

What does it feel like to be in Flow

1 **Goals are clear**
The steps one takes towards attaining a goal

Internal Standard

Outside opinion:

2 **Feedback is immediate**
Know what one does matters.
Know how well one is doing.

3 **Balance between Opportunity & Capacity**

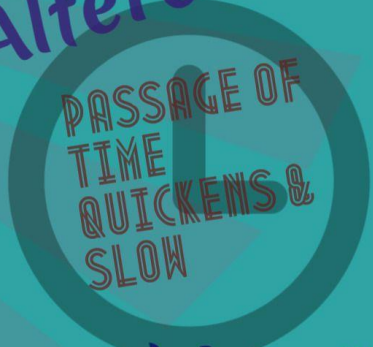
Achieving triumphs **Challenges = Skills**

4 **Concentration**
Evolving complexity of tasks

5 **Present is What Matters**
Escape from current situation

6 **Control is no problem**
Possibility of making things happen as desire & move in harmony with the activity

7 **Sense of time is Altered**
Total immersion in the experience
Temporary loss of self



Adapted from Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
Done by AlexiusC (2013)



TASK: CREATE YOUR OWN SENSORY DIET – FIND THE ACTIVITIES WHICH CREATE ‘FLOW’ AND THE JUST RIGHT STATE. EMBED THEM INTO YOUR DAY.



DID YOU KNOW?

- The Family Fund will contribute to the purchase of sensory equipment, you can apply each year – even if you are in employment



Family Fund
Helping disabled children

- “A Stitch Different” makes bespoke weighted items as a non-profit organisation with flexible payment plans

A
Stitch
Different

Bespoke Handmade Weighted Therapy Products
Sensory Items

Community Interest Company

IAS MANCHESTER (FORMERLY PARENT PARTNERSHIP SERVICE)

- Information, Advice and Support (IAS) Manchester is the new name for the Parent Partnership Service. IAS Manchester offers impartial information, advice and support to parents and carers to increase their involvement in the education of their children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- IAS Manchester hold a register of parents and carers who wish to share their skills and knowledge or to take part in consultations, drop-ins or simply get their voice heard.

Who to Contact

Telephone 0161 209 8356 (from 10am - 3pm)

Email parents@manchester.gov.uk

Website [IAS Manchester webpages](#)

THANKS FOR WATCHING

- If you wish to go on to have your two telephone calls with an occupational therapist to help develop some individualized sensory strategies to help meet your child's sensory needs.

To help prepare:

- Have a think about your own child's sensory systems and how they are functioning.
- Make a list of your child's sensory behaviors and how they are impacting on their ability to carry out day to day tasks e.g. play, feeding and washing



REFERENCES

- The Sensory Team Handbook by Nancy Mucklow
- Tools for Teens Strategies to Promote Sensory Processing by Diana Henry et al
- What Survival Looks Like in Primary School
- What Survival Looks Like in High School
- Brain Highways – Proprioceptive and Vestibular System
- Making Sense of Sensory Behaviour – Falkirk Council
- Sensational Living by Winnie Dunn
- How to be a Superhero called Self-Control! By Lauren Brukner



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING