

Alerting and Calming Strategies

In order to attend to task, focus, and learn, our nervous systems need to be at an optimal level of arousal or alertness. We use different sensory experiences throughout the day to keep our nervous system at an optimal level of arousal for the activity we our engaged in, through a process called “self-regulation”. For example, if our nervous system is *below* the optimal level of arousal for the activity, a sensory experience that excites our nervous system (i.e. cold shower) would bring us up. If our nervous system is *above* the optimal level of arousal, a sensory experience that relaxes our nervous system (i.e. rocking in a rocking chair) would help calm us down.

Sensory Strategies		
Sensory System	Calming	Alerting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Music with a steady beat -White noise -Monotone voice -Music/metronome at 80 bpm or slower -Block out noise (headphones) -Nature sounds, tribal drums, some rap music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Non-rhythmical -Loud and fast music -High pitch -Music/metronome at 80 bpm or faster -Laughter -Yelling/crying -Crowd noise
Visual (Sight)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Natural lighting -Dim lights/lights off -Minimal visual clutter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fluorescent lights -Lights on -Blinking bright lights -Glare from light on water -Sunlight through leaves -Focused light (i.e. flashlight)
Tactile (Touch)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Deep pressure (hugs, bear hug vests, bean bag squishes, blanket wraps) -Neutral warmth -Small, safe places -Weighted blankets/weighted vests -Vibration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Light touch -Tickles -Fast, irregular strokes -Extreme temperatures (hot and/or cold) -Blowing -Vibration
Gustatory and Olfactory (Taste and Smell)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Crunchy foods -Chewy foods -Mild flavors -Neutral temperatures -No odors -Calming scents: lavender, vanilla, pine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Spicy, sour flavors -Cold or hot temperature -Crunch foods -Chewy foods -Strong odors -Alerting scents: citrus, mint
Proprioceptive (Muscles)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Weight bearing/sustained muscle tension -heavy work (carrying, pushing, pulling, jumping, crashing) -Fine and gross motor activities that involve resistive movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Quick muscle stretch -Bouncing -Barefoot walking
Vestibular (Movement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Slow, rhythmical movement -One plane-same speed and direction (i.e. linear, repetition, rocking chairs, wagons, trikes/bikes, scooter boards, swings) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fast, irregular movement -Different planes -Spinning -Sudden stops and starts -Bouncing on lap, trampoline -Slides -Swings