

Sensory Motor Preferences

We all use our senses in different ways to help regulate our nervous systems so we can keep our energy levels “just right”.

We might cross our legs, twirl our hair, have a coffee or go for a walk. Adults are generally more adept at managing our energy levels in a more subtle way than children are.

Have a look at the list below to identify strategies you may use to help regulate your system throughout the day. Each action may help to either relax you or to raise your state of alertness. It may also do both, depending on the time or place associated with the action. Think about how the duration and intensity impacts upon your mood & alertness?

When you realise how many strategies you are using you can see why children may need help to modulate their energies. You may see your child trying to employ some of the activities listed below. They are trying to get their energy levels just right, help them choose appropriate ones.

Oral

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| ✓ Drink milkshake | Crunch nuts / chips | Suck on candy |
| ✓ Eat something spicy | Bite nails | Chew gum |
| ✓ Crunch / suck on ice | Eat fresh vegetables / fruit | Chew on hair |
| ✓ Chew side of cheek / lip | Eat something spicy | Drink coffee/tea |
| ✓ Chew on a pencil | Whistle/hum | |
| ✓ Deep breathing | Drink warm milk/hot chocolate | |

Movement

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| ✓ Doodle / draw | Bounce crossed legs | Dance |
| ✓ Use a rocking chair | Tap feet / toes | Ride Bike |
| ✓ Squirm in a chair | Tap pen or pencil | Run/Jog |
| ✓ Rock back two legs of chair | Work in garden / yard | Aerobics |
| ✓ Rock or sway body | Stretch / shake body parts | Lift weights |
| ✓ Do housework | Do slow head / neck rolls | |

Touch

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| ✓ Put hands to face / mouth | Pat a dog / cat | fidget with: |
| ✓ Jiggle keys / coins in pocket | Get a massage | straw |
| ✓ Take a cool shower | Rub / scratch skin | paper clips |
| ✓ Take a warm bath | Twist hair | nails |
| ✓ Drum fingers / pen on table | | pen / pencil |
| | | any jewellery |
| | | clothing tags |

Visual

- | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| ✓ Watch a fireplace | Dim the lighting | Close eyes |
| ✓ Watch a fishtank | Use fluorescent lighting | Avoid clutter |
| ✓ Watch a sunset / sunrise | | |

Listen

- | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| ✓ Classical music | Work in a noisy room | Sing/talk to self |
| ✓ Heavy beats (rock) | Relaxation music | Talk to others |
| ✓ Work in a quiet room | | |

Modified from the “Alert Program”
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