Child Mental Health Week 2019: Using Sensory Processing to look after my Mental Health



Topic:

How can I use my senses and sensory processing to look after my mental health?

Why:

According to Sutton and Nicholson (2011), sensory-based treatment has been identified as an effective treatment approach for clients who are distressed, anxious, agitated, or potentially aggressive and as an alternative for more coercive actions; they also determined that sensory modulation approaches are particularly helpful for people with trauma histories, PTSD, and self-harming behaviours.



Scanlan and Novak (2015) did a scoping review (summary of new research areas) regarding sensory approaches; a total of 17 studies were included in the final review. A range of sensory

approaches were evaluated. In general, service users reported they were useful for self-management of distress. Positive outcomes demonstrated that adopting sensory approaches may help reduce behavioural disturbances, empower staff and consumers to build positive relationships and provide simple positive and inexpensive strategies that can be used post discharge.

How:

Alerting Activities; are the activities that help prepare our brains and body for productivety by ‘waking up’ our bodies sensory systems.

Calming Activities; these activities are aimed calming the body’s sensory system by being centred and ready for learning/productivity.

Touch



- A warm bath (calming)
- A big hug (calming)
- Sequin pillows (calming)
- Velvet (calming/alerting)

Taste



- A sour sweet (alerting)
- Chewing gum (calming)
- Something crunchy (calming)

- Something cold (alerting)

Smell



- Aromatherapy (calming/alerting)
- Vanilla and Lavender (usually calming for most)
- Peppermint (usually alerting for most people)
- Choosing a shower gel that you like (depending on the smell – calming and alerting)

Sound



- Listening to calming music (calming)
- Listening to rock music (alerting)
- Quiet time or space (calming)

Sight



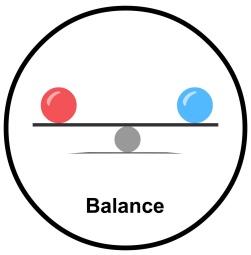
- Watching a sunrise (usually calming)
- Watching fish swimming (usually calming)
- Lots of flashing lights or colours (alerting)

Movement



- Going for a run (calming)
- Rocking in rocking chair (calming)
- Big breath out – blowing bubbles out (calming)
- Jumping and spinning (alerting)

Balance



- Spinning (alerting)
- Swinging (calming)
- Rocking in a rocking chair (calming)
- Jumping and crashing (alerting)

Further Information:

Moore, K. (2016). Following the evidence: Sensory approaches in mental health http://www.sensoryconnectionprogram.com/sensory_treatment.php

Key Tips:

- Find what works for you
- Check out our page on Mental Health here!



Everyone needs a little therapy.