

Weakness of attitude
becomes weakness of
character.
Albert Einstein

NOVEMBER, 2013

Therakids

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF EDUCATORS AND PLANTING THE SEEDS OF CLASSROOM WELLNESS.

SENSORY OR BEHAVIOR

Teachers may feel that a student's lack of attention or behavior is a disruption to the classroom, but what the child's sensory system may be telling us is that their system is either over-stimulated or under-stimulated. A student who appears bored and is playing with his paper may be under-stimulated or a student who appears to be having issues with behavior may be over-stimulated. We must listen to the child's sensory system and what it is telling the student. Classroom techniques may improve learning and attention in the classroom. Below are some techniques that may help a child who is under or over-stimulated become more focused and attentive.

FOR THE OVER-STIMULATED CHILD

- Work Space- Allow the student to work in alternative spaces: floor, under the desk, or a "free pick"
- Provide alternate seating for the student: large floor pillow or a bean bag chair.
- Use visual information with verbal direction-visual assistance often provides more opportunity for organization.
- Minimize visual clutter.
- Use a calm, consistent tone of voice when talking with the student.
- Color code binders or folders for schoolwork.
- Use a visual schedule.
- Use activity checklists for the student to cross off throughout school day or per activity.
- Use a timer to signify the end of a task or activity.

SITTING AND CIRCLE TIME:

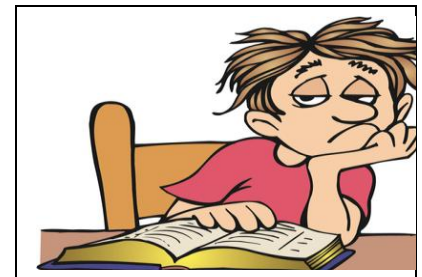
- Try a beanbag chair or a soft pillow large enough to support the body's surface.
- If necessary, use a chair to sit on while participating in floor time activities.
- Carry the weighted lap pad or snake.
- Allow the student to hold, squeeze or use a fidget.
- Encourage movement, which provides sensory input before and during sitting (allow to sit on cushion, sit on large ball, sit on partially blown up ball, etc).
- Work within the student's attention span- if the child can sit well for 25 seconds, make that count by positively reinforcing saying, "I'm so proud of you for listening so well" or "You should feel proud of yourself for sitting so nicely".
- Praise attention and appropriate behavior. Praise often using consistent visuals like stickers, high fives, and verbal praise.
- Use music or song to encourage attention.
- Allow the student to sit near the teacher and help by passing out items or handing over items for discussion.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

- Decrease visual over-stimulation by limiting the number of hangings on the walls and ceilings
- Avoid classroom clutter by providing containers for toys labeled with pictures of items found inside
- Decrease auditory over-stimulation by dividing a large classroom into smaller play areas.
- Place children in small groups for activities throughout the day
- Provide a quiet space that children can retreat to when over-stimulated.
- Define this space by setting up a tent or drapes to make it darker and provide pillows or bean bags to lie on.

FOR THE UNDER-STIMULATED CHILD

- Sucking: keep a water bottle with a pop-top or drink using a thin or curly straw
- Vibration: uses a vibrating pillow or cushions, a wiggle pen for letter or shape formation, hold a vibrating toy massager.
- Chewing: chewing gum during table-top or listening tasks.
- Rhythm: add rhythm to the activity by clapping each letter of a spelling word or name...etc. Add actions to a story for the students to act out.



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Therakids P.C. provides specialized occupational, physical and speech therapy services to help children overcome developmental concerns. Services are provided in the school setting throughout southwestern Illinois by licensed occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, physical therapists, physical therapist assistants and speech-language pathologists. **Email: www.Therakids.org**

