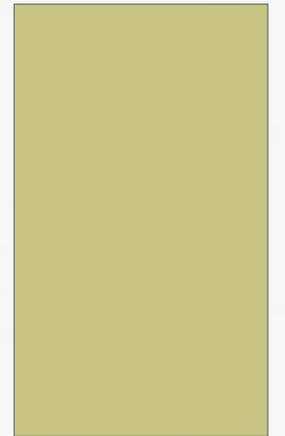


THE ZONES

OF REGULATION®

LESSON 10

A CURRICULUM DESIGNED TO FOSTER
SELF-REGULATION AND EMOTIONAL CONTROL
WRITTEN AND CREATED BY LEAH M. KUYPERS MA ED. OTR/L



EXPLORING SENSORY SUPPORT TOOLS

Overview

In this lesson, clients sample a variety of sensory tools to explore sensory supports and discover how the various sensory supports affect their level of alertness. The specific sensory tools used will vary depending on the materials and tools you have available for use by clients. See “Materials” in this lesson for suggestions.

GOALS FOR THIS ACTIVITY

- Clients gain insight about how sensory support tools can help regulate zones
- Clients understand that sensory support tools can help them wake up and be more alert as well as help them calm down and feel more organized
- Clients understand that sensory support tools should be used in all zones in order to self-regulate
- Clients learn how to access and use sensory support tools

MATERIALS

The specific materials presented to clients in this lesson depend on the sensory supports and equipment to which you have access. Listed below are several recommended sensory supports to try. Some require specialized equipment, such as a swing, that may not be available for client use. If this is the case, clients can explore many other recommended sensory supports using objects commonly found at home or in the community, such as carrying a stack of heavy books.

Two websites from which sensory items can be ordered are www.abilitations.com and www.southpawenterprises.com.

MATERIALS (CONTINUED)

- Sensory tools to explore, such as any of the following:
 - Squeezing a fidget ball or Silly Putty®/Theraputty
 - Digging or hunting for objects in a rice bin
 - Sitting with a weighted blanket, vest, or lap pad
 - Sitting on a Move-n-sit or Disc-o-sit cushion (examples of inflatable cushions that provide a client seated on it with a subtle movement experience)
 - Wearing noise-canceling headphones
 - Wall or floor push-ups, sit-ups, stretches, etc.
 - Pushing, pulling, or carrying something heavy (meaningful activities that involve heavy work, such as stacking chairs, pushing a cart, carrying a loaded basket/stack of books, pushing a broom or mop, wiping tables, dusting)

MATERIALS (CONTINUED)

- Swinging, sliding, etc. on backyard equipment or public playground equipment
- Playing on scooter boards, sit & spin, riding a bicycle or tricycle, etc.
- Jumping on an outdoor or mini trampoline inside
- Deep pressure squishes with a bean bag or oversized pillow
- Bouncing on a therapy ball
- Burrowing in pillows/cushions/blankets

- One Zones Tools worksheet (Reproducible R) for each client
- Colored pencils in Zones colors
- A timer

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Everyone has sensations they seek out, as well as ones they avoid. For example, one person might enjoy smelling perfumes or find incense calming; while others may find these same smells or stimuli noxious, which causes them to feel less regulated and uncomfortable. Sensory tools, such as those listed in this lesson, can be used to help calm or alert the central nervous system, so clients are better able to attend to and focus on relevant stimuli and filter out irrelevant, background stimuli. By providing clients with the sensory input they crave in a meaningful, adaptive way, clients' central nervous systems will become more organized, and clients will be less likely to engage in disruptive behaviors to get their sensory needs met.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (CONTINUED)

When they are performing tasks (especially non-preferred tasks) some clients find it effective to use sensory supports that help meet their needs to touch things (such as playing with a fidget ball), move (sitting on a therapy ball rather than a chair), and work their muscles (tying a stretch band or fabric around the legs of a chair so clients can pull and push against it with his/her legs). Other clients require more intense activities, such as heavy work, running, climbing, crashing, swinging, and burrowing under pillows/bean bags, to help them reach an optimal state of alertness for learning and socializing.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (CONTINUED)

Clients who have sensory processing difficulties require and individualized “sensory diet” of tailored activities that help organize their sensory system for improved modulation and regulation. Sensory tools listed in this lesson are by no means comprehensive. Clients will find some sensory tools more powerful for regulation than others, and it is intended that the list of tools used be customized for individual clients. For more information on sensory integration and processing, consult with a skilled occupational therapist with training in the area of sensory processing disorder.

NOTE TO SERVICE PROVIDERS

Although occupational therapists have an extensive background in sensory integration theory, many service providers and parents are skilled at carrying out the everyday sensory supports with clients. This activity can be done in a home facilitated by a service provider or parent who has working knowledge and experience in helping with client sensory needs. If sensory processing disorders are new to you, it is recommended that co-teach this lesson with an occupational therapist or observe the O.T. as he/she teaches the lesson. If a client is experiencing significant sensory seeking or defensive behaviors, it is highly recommended that you consult with an O.T. who is trained in working with Sensory Processing Disorder. Sensory seeking can be

NOTE TO SERVICE PROVIDERS (CONTINUED)

defined as needing to experience a sense at a far greater intensity than what would be typically expected for a child of that age. It is often seen as the client seeking movement, touch, and/or input to the muscles and joints (such as through crashing, squeezing, jumping, bumping, and rolling). Sensory defensiveness can be described as experiencing a sensation that is tolerable to most as extremely unpleasant. This is often seen with the sense of touch (e.g., sensitive to different clothing textures or a dislike for grooming activities), hearing (sensitive to sounds), taste (e.g., being a picky eater), smell (more sensitive to odors than others), and movement (e.g., unsure of footing on unstable surfaces).

PREPARATION

- Copy of Zones Tools Worksheet for client
- Set up different supports at different locations around the room. Depending upon the amount of time available, a pre-determined amount of time may be allowed for each sensory support. Be sure to allow enough time for clients to record what tool they are using, determine the zone(s) in which it would be beneficial, and transition between sensory supports. Clients may record more than one zone per tool.
- Make a list of all the sensory supports (for client to refer to for spelling) or write them yourself on client's worksheet

LEAD-IN

- Instruct client that he/she will be rotating through a variety of items to explore different sensory support tools and rate their effect.
- Share the activities and goals of the lesson.

POTENTIAL BLUE ZONE/ALERTING TOOLS

Blue Zone ideas to explore with clients include the following:
chewing gum, eating tart candy, drinking water, doodling, exercising,
completing Brain Gym® moves, listening to lively music, and getting fresh
air.

ACTIVITY

- Invite client to utilize this first sensory tool while you review the goals and directions of the lesson.
- Explain that he/she will rotate through the items so they get a chance to experience all of the sensory tools. While using each tool, they need to consider if the tool helped them feel calmer, more awake, or if it had no effect. If they notice it was calming or alerting, have them make the connection that they need a calming tool in the Yellow and Red Zones and an alerting tool in the Blue Zone.

ACTIVITY (CONTINUED)

- Have clients use the worksheet to circle the zone(s) in which they feel the tool would be helpful. Inform clients that it is acceptable to circle more than one zone for each tool or indicate that it would help in “none” of the Zones.
- Note to Service Provider: The Zones Tools worksheet will vary for each client, as they see what tools are effective for them. Do not try to push clients to circle a particular zone on the worksheet, but point out what you noticed while they participated with the tool.

ACTIVITY (CONTINUED)

- After clients have completed the worksheet for that tool, have them rotate tools.
- As they rotate through the tools, assess client's judgments of which tools would help in each zone are consistent with your observations.
- As clients rotate through items, provide further explanation of how tools can assist in regulating their emotions and bodies. Tailor the language depending on the comprehension level of the client. Instruct them that some sensory support tools help them wake up and feel more alert if they are in the Blue Zone, some help them calm down and focus if they are in the Yellow or Red Zone, and some help them stay in the Green Zone. Today they get to test out different sensory tools to see what they think will be the most helpful.

ACTIVITY (CONTINUED)

- Ask clients what their day would look like if they stayed in the Blue Zone all day and what would be the consequences of this. Explain the importance of having tools and strategies they can use to wake them up.
- Do the same as above for the Yellow and Red Zones.

WRAP-UP

Facilitate a discussion, inviting client--and parent(s)/sibling(s) if they participated-- to share tools they found helped to calm them down, wake them up, and help keep them in the Green Zone. Discuss that everyone is different and what works for one person will be different from what works for another.

WAYS TO GENERALIZE LEARNING

As discussed earlier, it is imperative to set aside time daily for clients to practice the tools. If a client is experiencing sensory differences, it is vital that he/she is able to access the sensory supports proactively so the client has a meaningful and adaptive way of getting his/her sensory needs met. If the client's sensory needs aren't being accommodated, the client will still find a way to meet his/her sensory needs, but in a more disruptive and maladaptive manner (for example, getting out of his/her seat when expected to remain seated, getting up or rolling around on floor when supposed to be attentive, running when walking is the expectation, or bumping/touching others).

WAYS TO GENERALIZE LEARNING (CONTINUED)

As sensory supports are explored using the Zones Tools worksheet and it becomes apparent what is most effective for the client, it is imperative that all staff and parents are brought on board to support the client in accessing his/her tools to get the sensory needs met. Sharing the Zones Toolbox that the client creates in the next chapter will assist in this process.