

SENSORY PROCESSING: EDUCATOR HANDOUTS FOR THE CLASSROOM

INCLUDED HANDOUTS:

- Sensory Processing Information
- Sensory 101: Location and Function of the 8 Sensory Systems
- Creating a Sensory Friendly Classroom
- Sensory Processing: How it Impacts Self-Regulation, Attention, and Student Learning
- Sensory Processing Red Flags
- Avoiding Sensory Overload in the Classroom
- Sensory Break Ideas for the Classroom
- Calming Strategies for the Classroom
- Heavy Work Activities for the Classroom
- Organizing Activities for the Classroom
- Alerting Activities for the Classroom
- Classroom Movement Ideas for the Classroom
- Flexible Seating Ideas for the Classroom
- Activities to Help with Transitions
- Sensory Bottles



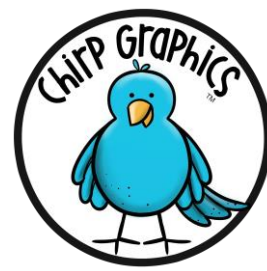
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WHAT ARE SENSORY PROCESSING EDUCATOR HANDOUTS?

Students with sensory processing differences often have difficulty filtering, interpreting, or responding to sensory information. This can lead to feelings of overwhelm, anxiety, or frustration, particularly in a busy school environment. These educator handouts help busy educators better understand their students' sensory needs and implement strategies to help them by resetting their attention, reducing sensory overload, and improving their capacity to engage in learning by meeting their sensory needs more effectively.

Increased Awareness of Sensory Needs: The handouts, such as *Sensory Processing Information* and *Sensory 101: Location and Function of the 8 Sensory Systems*, provide educators with a foundational understanding of how students process sensory input. This knowledge equips teachers to identify specific sensory triggers and respond appropriately.

Effective Strategies for Classroom Adaptations: Resources like *Creating a Sensory-Friendly Classroom* and *Avoiding Sensory Overload in the Classroom* offer actionable tips for adjusting the environment. These adaptations may include changes in lighting, seating, or sound levels, which can help reduce sensory stress and promote a calming learning space.

Tools for Supporting Self-Regulation and Focus: Handouts like *Sensory Processing: How It Impacts Self-Regulation, Attention, and Student Learning* and *Calming Strategies for the Classroom* teach educators how to implement calming techniques. By helping students regulate their sensory input, educators can support better emotional control, focus, and classroom engagement.

Movement-Based Learning: Handouts such as *Heavy Work Activities for the Classroom*, *Classroom Movement Ideas for the Classroom*, and *Sensory Break Ideas for the Classroom* provide educators with creative, sensory-friendly activities. These movement-based strategies improve students' ability to stay alert and manage sensory overload, promoting better engagement with learning tasks.

Flexible Seating and Sensory Tools: The *Flexible Seating Ideas for the Classroom* and *Sensory Bottles* handouts suggest tools that offer students a way to manage their sensory needs while learning. Flexible seating options and sensory bottles provide tactile and movement-based feedback, which can help students self-regulate without leaving the learning environment.

Transition Support: Resources like *Activities to Help with Transitions* assist educators in making transitions between activities or settings smoother. Since transitions can be a significant source of stress for students with sensory processing differences, these strategies help reduce anxiety and maintain a structured, predictable routine.

By incorporating these resources into classroom routines, educators can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, helping students with sensory processing differences better engage, self-regulate, and succeed.

SENSORY 101

LOCATION AND FUNCTION OF THE 8 SENSORY SYSTEMS

SENSORY SYSTEM	DESCRIPTION & LOCATION
OLFACTORY (smell)	The sense of smell comes from our olfactory system which include chemical receptors within the nose that travel directly to the brain into the limbic system (responsible for emotions and memory). The sense of smell is highly correlated with taste. Location: chemical receptors in the nose
AUDITORY (hearing)	The auditory system includes listening and hearing. It also includes filtering and selectively attending to auditory information as well as process sounds such as pitch, frequency, and where sounds are coming from (localizing). Location: inner ear
VISUAL (sight)	The visual system allows us to see our surroundings and make sense of our environment visually. Our movement and balance rely heavily on our visual system. We use our eyes to scan and visually assess our surroundings. Location: retina of the eye
GUSTATORY (taste)	The gustatory system allows us to taste using our tongue. We have 5 different flavors: sweet, salty, bitter, sour, and savory (umami). Other flavors we may taste are actually related to smell; our sense of taste is closely related to smell. Location: chemical receptors in the tongue
TACTILE (touch)	The tactile system provides us with a sense of touch by receiving information from receptor cells in the skin. These receptor cells are all over our bodies and provide information about light touch, pressure, vibration, temperature and pain. This sensory system contributes to the development of body awareness and motor planning Location: skin
PROPRIOCEPTION (body position)	Proprioception is our unconscious awareness of body position. It tells us about the position of our body parts, relation to each other and their relation to other people. Our proprioceptive receptors are located in the muscles, tendons, ligaments, and connective tissue. It allows us to receive feedback on how much force we use Location: muscles and joints
VESTIBULAR (balance)	The vestibular system provides information about where our body is in space, specifically the speed and direction of movement, gravity and changing head positions. Location: inner ear
INTEROCEPTION (internal body sense)	The interoceptive system is a lesser know sensory system. It gives us information on our internal organs. It tells us whether we are hungry, thirsty, need to use the bathroom, if we have a stomachache, or if our heart is beating rapidly, for example. This sensory system also contributes to our emotional regulation by helping us know how we feel by recognizing our body's signals. Location: internal organs

CREATING A SENSORY-FRIENDLY CLASSROOM

A sensory-friendly classroom involves creating a supportive environment and implementing various sensory, sensory processing, and movement strategies. These strategies can help students manage their behaviors, maintain attention, transition between tasks, and engage in learning activities more effectively. Here are some practical suggestions:

1. Create a Sensory-Friendly Environment:

- **Lighting** – Ensure that the classroom has appropriate lighting. Natural light and warm, soft lighting can be more calming.
- **Noise Control** – Minimize unnecessary noise by using earplugs, noise-canceling headphones, or providing quiet corners for students to retreat to when overwhelmed.
- **Seating Arrangements** – Allow flexible seating options, such as fidget tools, stability balls, or standing desks, to accommodate different sensory preferences.

2. Establish Consistent Routines:

- **Morning Routine** – Start the day with a consistent morning routine that helps students transition into the classroom environment smoothly.
- **Visual Schedules** – Create visual schedules or timelines to help students understand and anticipate daily routines and transitions.
- **Timers and Alarms** – Use timers or alarms to signal upcoming transitions or changes in activities, providing a clear signal for students to prepare for the next task.

3. Offer Movement Breaks:

- **Scheduled Breaks** – Incorporate regular movement breaks into the daily schedule. These breaks can include short walks, stretching exercises, or brief physical activities to help students release excess energy.
- **Sensory Paths** – Create sensory paths or designated areas where students can engage in specific movement activities to enhance focus and self-regulation.
- **Sensory Breaks** – Consistently integrating sensory breaks into the schedule helps students proactively manage sensory input, stay focused, and engage in classroom activities.

4. Utilize Sensory Tools:

- **Fidget Tools** – Allow fidget tools, stress balls, or textured objects to provide sensory input and help students maintain attention during quiet activities.
- **Weighted Blankets or Lap Pads** – These tools can be used during independent work or quiet time to help students feel more grounded and calmer.
- **Noise-Cancelling Headphones** – Noise-canceling headphones can be helpful for students sensitive to auditory stimuli. They can help reduce the impact of background noises, allowing students to concentrate.

5. Incorporate Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques:

- **Mindful Breathing Exercises** —Try beginning class with a brief mindful breathing exercise. This can help center and calm students, preparing them for the upcoming activities.
- **Mindfulness Activities** – Introduce mindfulness activities, such as guided meditation, yoga, stretching, mindful listening, or mindful coloring, to promote self-awareness and emotional regulation.

6. Provide Clear Instructions and Expectations:

- **Communication** – Use clear expectations and instructions to reduce anxiety and uncertainty.
- **Break Down Complex Tasks** – Reduce big tasks into smaller, manageable steps to make it easier for students to follow through.

7. Support Self-Advocacy:

- **Provide Sensory Breaks and Tools** – Students can learn to recognize their sensory needs and advocate for themselves when they require a break.
- **Offer Choice and Flexibility** – Providing options that accommodate students' sensory preferences empowers them to advocate for the conditions that help them focus and feel comfortable.

8. Use Visual Aids:

- **Visual Cues for Transitions and Behavior Expectations** – Incorporate visual cues to facilitate smooth transitions between activities and communicate behavior expectations.
- **Use of Visual Schedules** – Visual schedules clearly outline daily activities or routines using pictures or symbols.

SENSORY PROCESSING: HOW IT IMPACTS SELF-REGULATION, ATTENTION, AND STUDENT LEARNING

1. Self-regulation:

- Sensory processing influences an individual's ability to regulate emotions, behavior, and alertness.
- Students may be hypersensitive (over-responsive) or hyposensitive (under-responsive) to certain sensory stimuli. For example, a hypersensitive student may find bright lights or loud noises overwhelming, while a hypo-sensitive student may seek out intense sensory experiences.
- Difficulties in self-regulation can lead to challenges in managing stress, frustration, and anxiety, impacting overall emotional well-being.

2. Attention:

- Sensory processing plays a crucial role in sustaining attention and focus.
- Sensory challenges can lead to distractibility and difficulty filtering irrelevant stimuli.
- Sensory-seeking behaviors or sensory aversions may interfere with a student's ability to concentrate on classroom tasks.

3. Student Learning:

- Sensory processing affects how students engage with and process information in educational settings.
- Sensory preferences may influence a student's ability to focus on tasks, participate in classroom activities, and interact with educational materials.
- For example, students sensitive to tactile stimuli may struggle with handwriting tasks or avoid activities involving certain textures.

Recognizing and addressing sensory needs can create supportive and inclusive environments for students with varying sensory processing profiles.



SENSORY PROCESSING

RED FLAGS

Here are 20 sensory processing "red flags" that educators should know when working with students, especially those with sensory processing differences. These red flags can help educators identify when a student might need sensory support, enabling them to adjust to the environment or provide calming sensory strategies.

SENSORY PROCESSING RED FLAGS:

- 1) Difficulty maintaining attention in noisy or visually stimulating environments.
- 2) Overreacting to loud sounds, bright lights, or strong smells.
- 3) Avoiding messy play (e.g., finger painting, sand) due to discomfort with textures.
- 4) Seeking excessive movement (rocking, spinning, or running) to self-regulate.
- 5) Overly sensitive to touch, reacting strongly to light touches or hugs.
- 6) Trouble with transitions, becoming upset or anxious when switching activities.
- 7) Difficulty with motor planning, needing help to carry out sequences of movements.
- 8) Clumsiness or frequent bumping into objects and people.
- 9) Chewing on clothing, pencils, or other objects for oral sensory input.
- 10) Difficulty with personal space, either invading others' space or avoiding it.
- 11) Resistance to certain clothing, textures, or tags due to tactile sensitivity.
- 12) Trouble sitting still for extended periods, constantly fidgeting or squirming.
- 13) Avoiding eye contact or becoming overwhelmed by social interactions.
- 14) Delayed response to sensory input, seeming unaware of pain, temperature, or other sensations.
- 15) Inconsistent reactions to sensory stimuli (e.g., not reacting to a loud noise one day but overreacting the next).
- 16) Preferring dark or quiet spaces to self-regulate when overwhelmed.
- 17) Difficulty with fine motor tasks, such as using scissors or writing.
- 18) Strong preference for certain foods or avoiding many foods due to texture or smell.
- 19) Overreaction to changes in routine, becoming upset by even small deviations.
- 20) Frequent meltdowns or shutdowns when overwhelmed by sensory input.



AVOIDING SENSORY OVERLOAD IN THE CLASSROOM

Here are 18 ways educators can help reduce sensory overload in the classroom for students with sensory processing differences: These strategies can help reduce sensory overload and create a more inclusive, supportive classroom environment.

PREVENTING SENSORY OVERLOAD:

- 1) **Create a quiet corner:** Designate a space where students can retreat to when they feel overwhelmed, equipped with calming tools like headphones, fidget toys, or weighted blankets.
- 2) **Offer noise-canceling headphones:** Provide noise-canceling headphones or earplugs to help students block out distracting background noise.
- 3) **Use soft lighting:** To reduce visual stimulation, replace harsh fluorescent lights with softer, natural lighting or dimmable lamps.
- 4) **Reduce visual clutter:** To reduce distractions, keep the classroom environment organized, visually simple, and uncluttered, including walls and bulletin boards.
- 5) **Provide sensory breaks:** Incorporate regular sensory breaks during transitions or after challenging tasks, allowing students time to stretch, move, or relax.
- 6) **Use a visual schedule:** Provide a clear, predictable visual schedule to help students prepare for upcoming tasks and changes in routine.
- 7) **Offer fidget tools:** Allow students to use fidget tools, stress balls, or sensory bands to help them self-regulate without disrupting the class.
- 8) **Use soft or nature sounds:** Play gentle background music or nature sounds to create a soothing atmosphere and mask loud noises.
- 9) **Provide textured seating:** To support movement needs, offer alternative seating options like textured cushions, wobble stools, or therapy balls.
- 10) **Teach deep breathing exercises:** Introduce mindfulness techniques like deep breathing or guided imagery to help students manage stress and anxiety.
- 11) **Allow flexible seating:** Provide seating options like bean bags, floor mats, or standing desks to accommodate students' sensory preferences.
- 12) **Incorporate movement breaks:** Build movement activities into the school day, like stretching, yoga, or walking around the room.
- 13) **Use calm-down kits:** Create kits with sensory tools like stress putty, chewy necklaces, or weighted lap pads that students can access when needed.
- 14) **Introduce sensory-friendly transitions:** Use sound cues, visual signals, or gentle music to signal transitions, rather than loud bells or abrupt changes.
- 15) **Keep materials organized:** Store supplies in labeled bins or drawers to reduce visual clutter and allow easy access without overstimulation.
- 16) **Create personal spaces:** Offer students desk dividers or personal space markers to reduce the sensation of being crowded or overwhelmed by peers.
- 17) **Provide oral sensory tools:** Offer chewable pencils or oral sensory items for students who need oral stimulation to focus.
- 18) **Model calm behavior:** Maintain a calm, low-volume tone, and body language, as students with sensory differences may pick up on and mimic your energy.

SENSORY BREAK IDEAS FOR THE CLASSROOM

Here are 15 quick and straightforward sensory breaks that educators can implement in the general education classroom to support students with sensory processing differences. These sensory breaks are easy to incorporate into the school day and can help students with sensory processing differences self-regulate and stay engaged in learning.

SENSORY BREAK IDEAS FOR THE CLASSROOM:

- 1) **Wall Push-Ups** – Students press their hands against a wall and push, helping provide proprioceptive input to calm and regulate their bodies.
- 2) **Chair Push-Ups** – Have students push down on their chair and simultaneously raise their bottom off the chair as able, providing deep pressure input through their arms and shoulders.
- 3) **Stretch Breaks** – Simple stretches like touching toes, reaching for the ceiling, or side stretches can help reset a student's focus.
- 4) **Desk Fidgets** – Use small fidgets (stress balls, putty, or textured objects) to give students a tactile outlet without disrupting the class.
- 5) **Deep Breathing Exercises** – Guide students through slow, deep breathing to help calm and refocus their nervous systems.
- 6) **"Heavy Work" Jobs** – Assign tasks like carrying books, moving chairs, or erasing the board, which provide proprioceptive input through lifting and moving.
- 7) **Sensory Walks** – A quick walk down the hall or around the classroom can provide vestibular input and a mental reset.
- 8) **Sensory Path** – Create a movement sequence in an area in the classroom using colored Velcro labels with activities such as jump, walk heel-to-toe, or turn in a circle, for example. Movement breaks help students reset attention, reduce sensory overload, and improve capacity to engage in learning.
- 9) **Hand Squeezes** – Encourage students to squeeze their own hands or a stress ball to release tension and calm sensory overload.
- 10) **Desk Stretching** – Let students stretch their arms and legs under their desks to move without leaving their seats.
- 11) **Visual Breaks** – Provide an area with calming visuals, such as soft lighting or a lava lamp, where students can take a short visual sensory break.
- 12) **Headphones for Noise Sensitivity** – Offer noise-canceling headphones or earplugs to students who are overwhelmed by classroom noise.
- 13) **Scented Playdough or Lotion** – Engage students' sense of smell and touch with calming, scented playdough or lotion for a brief calming sensory input.
- 14) **Finger Tracing on Sandpaper** – Students trace shapes or letters on textured surfaces like sandpaper for a quick tactile sensory break.
- 15) **Classroom Yoga Poses** – Integrate simple yoga poses like "tree pose" or "child's pose" into the day to help students ground and center themselves.



CALMING STRATEGIES FOR THE CLASSROOM

SENSORY IMPLICATIONS:

Students with sensory processing differences often have difficulty filtering and responding to sensory input, which can lead to feeling overwhelmed or overloaded in busy environments like classrooms. When faced with excessive sensory information—such as bright lights, loud noises, or even the texture of materials—these students can become overstimulated. This overstimulation can trigger anxiety, agitation, or shutdowns, making it difficult for them to focus on academic tasks or engage in classroom activities. Calming activities help regulate their sensory system.

CALMING ACTIVITIES:

- 1) **Deep Breathing Exercises** – Practice slow, deep breaths in and out to calm the nervous system.
- 2) **Weighted Lap Pads** – Use a weighted lap pad to provide calming proprioceptive input.
- 3) **Hand Fidgets** – Offer small, quiet fidget items like stress balls or putty to help students focus.
- 4) **Quiet Corners** – Set up a designated quiet space in the classroom where students can calm down.
- 5) **Sensory Bottles** – Provide sensory bottles filled with water, glitter, and small objects for visual calming.
- 6) **Soft Lighting** – Use dim or natural lighting instead of harsh fluorescent lights to create a calm environment.
- 7) **Noise-Canceling Headphones** – Offer headphones to reduce overwhelming noise.
- 8) **Yoga or Stretching** – Incorporate simple yoga stretches to help students release tension.
- 9) **Music** – Play soft, soothing music during independent work times.
- 10) **Calming Scents** – Use calming scents, like lavender, in sensory bottles or diffusers if allowed.
- 11) **Visual Schedules** – Provide visual schedules to give students a sense of predictability and reduce anxiety.
- 12) **Body Sock** – Allow students to use a body sock to provide deep pressure and help them feel secure.



CALMING STRATEGIES FOR THE CLASSROOM - PAGE 2

CALMING ACTIVITIES:

- 13) **Rocking Chair** – Provide a rocking chair or wobble stool for gentle movement that helps with self-regulation.
- 14) **Humming** – Encourage quiet humming or singing as a calming strategy.
- 15) **Drawing or Coloring** – Allow students to express themselves through quiet drawing or coloring.
- 16) **Progressive Muscle Relaxation** – Guide students through tensing and relaxing different muscle groups.
- 17) **Mindfulness Activities** – Practice short mindfulness exercises like focusing on the present moment.
- 18) **"Chewelry" Oral Fidgets** – Provide chewy necklaces or other chew-safe tools for students needing oral sensory input.
- 19) **Hand Massage** – Teach students to give themselves or each other gentle hand massages.
- 20) **Calming Visuals** – Use calming images or videos like nature scenes or fish tanks.
- 21) **Earplugs or White Noise Machines** – Offer earplugs or white noise machines for students sensitive to auditory stimuli.
- 22) **Gum** – If allowed, let students chew gum to help with focus.
- 23) **Use of Blankets or Soft Textures** – Allow students to wrap up in a soft blanket or cuddle with a plush toy for comfort.
- 24) **Visual Timers** – Visual timers help students see how much time remains for calming or focusing.
- 25) **Movement Breaks** – Give students regular breaks such as walking, stretching, or jumping jacks to release energy and reset.

SENSORY IMPACT:

These calming activities create a sense of control and grounding, reducing stress and helping students return to a state where they can focus, learn, and participate more effectively.



HEAVY WORK ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM

SENSORY IMPLICATIONS:

Students with sensory processing differences often struggle to regulate sensory input from their environment, leading to feelings of overstimulation, anxiety, or distraction. Engaging in heavy work activities, which activate the proprioceptive system (responsible for body awareness and movement), can help calm and organize their bodies and brains. These activities, such as pushing, pulling, or lifting, provide deep pressure input that helps the nervous system regulate arousal levels, reduce anxiety, and improve focus. This "grounding" effect can support students in staying more attentive and organized during academic tasks, enabling them to better participate in the school setting.

HEAVY WORK ACTIVITIES:

- 1) **Chair Push-Ups** – Have students push themselves up from their chairs using their arms.
- 2) **Wall Push-Ups** – Let students press against the wall and do standing push-ups for deep pressure input.
- 3) **Carrying Books** – Assign students the task of carrying heavy books from one place to another.
- 4) **Stacking Chairs** – Have students stack and unstack chairs as part of classroom clean-up.
- 5) **Pushing Desks or Chairs** – Let students push desks or chairs to help rearrange the classroom.
- 6) **Wiping Down Desks** – Give students wet wipes or spray bottles to clean desks, which involves pushing motions.
- 7) **Pulling Resistance Bands** – Provide resistance bands for students to pull and stretch.
- 8) **Moving Classroom Equipment** – Ask students to help move heavy classroom items, such as bins or supplies.
- 9) **Filling and Carrying a Backpack** – Fill a backpack with heavy books and have students carry it around.
- 10) **Stacking Books** – Let students stack books or other classroom items that have some weight.
- 11) **Climbing Stairs** – If possible, have students take the stairs instead of using the elevator.



HEAVY WORK ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM – PAGE 2

HEAVY WORK ACTIVITIES:

- 12) **Pushing a Cart** – Allow students to push a heavy cart or rolling bin filled with supplies.
- 13) **Carrying Lunch Trays** – Encourage students to carry their own lunch trays or help others carry theirs.
- 14) **Tug-of-War with a Rope** – Organize a tug-of-war game using a sturdy rope for proprioceptive input.
- 15) **Squeezing Playdough or Putty** – Provide playdough or therapy putty for students to knead and squeeze.
- 16) **Weighted Vest** – If appropriate, let students wear a weighted vest for calming proprioceptive input.
- 17) **Pushing Against the Wall** – Instruct students to push against the wall with their hands or feet to release energy.
- 18) **Carrying Water Bottles** – Have students carry water bottles or other filled containers.
- 19) **Lifting Bins of Classroom Materials** – Ask students to help lift bins of classroom materials or supplies.
- 20) **Tearing Paper** – Give students large sheets of paper to rip or tear into pieces.
- 21) **Holding or Passing Heavy Objects** – Allow students to hold or pass weighted balls or objects during circle time.
- 22) **Sweeping the Floor** – Have students sweep the classroom floor with a broom or dustpan.
- 23) **Cleaning Whiteboards** – Let students erase and clean the classroom whiteboard with pressure.

SENSORY IMPACT:

These heavy work activities can help students feel more regulated, focused, and ready for learning..



ORGANIZING ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM

SENSORY IMPLICATIONS:

Students with sensory processing differences often have difficulty interpreting and responding appropriately to sensory input from their environment. This can make it challenging for them to focus, stay calm, or engage in classroom tasks. Organizing activities, such as heavy work (e.g., pushing, pulling, or carrying items), deep pressure input, or rhythmic movements, help regulate their sensory systems. These activities can provide proprioceptive input (related to body awareness), which calms their nervous system, improves attention, and prepares their bodies and brains to participate in academic tasks. Essentially, organizing activities creates a balanced state, helping them manage sensory overload or under-responsiveness, making it easier to engage in learning.

ORGANIZING ACTIVITIES:

- 1) **Pushing Heavy Objects** – Have students push a (weighted) cart, bin, or chair across the room to provide deep proprioceptive input.
- 2) **Carrying Weighted Items** – Let students carry books, water bottles, or other weighted objects to different classroom areas.
- 3) **Pulling Resistance Bands** – Provide students with resistance bands to pull and stretch for proprioceptive input.
- 4) **Wall Push-Ups** – Have students push against a wall for deep pressure input and muscle activation.
- 5) **Stacking Chairs** – Encourage students to stack or unstack chairs at the end of class as a physical organizing activity.
- 6) **Body Squeezes** – Offer gentle body squeezes or teach students self-squeezing techniques to calm their nervous systems.
- 7) **Pushing a Rolling Pin** – Allow students to roll a pin over the clay, playdough, or paper for deep pressure and motor organization.
- 8) **Squeezing Stress Balls** – Provide students with stress balls or therapy putty to squeeze and manipulate with their hands.
- 9) **Weighted Lap Pads or Vests** – Use weighted lap pads or vests to give students calming, deep pressure during seated tasks.
- 10) **Chair Pulling** – Have students pull chairs across the room to engage their large muscles.
- 11) **Folding Towels or Fabrics** – Let students fold towels or fabrics, which provides rhythmic, repetitive, and organizing proprioceptive input.
- 12) **Wiping Down Surfaces** – Give students a wet cloth to wipe down desks, boards, or windows, engaging upper body muscles.



ORGANIZING ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM – PAGE 2

ORGANIZING ACTIVITIES:

- 13) **Obstacle Courses** – Set up a simple obstacle course where students can climb, crawl, and push through various stations.
- 14) **Scooter Board Activities** – Allow students to propel themselves across the room using a scooter board for heavy work.
- 15) **Pushing on a Therapy Ball** – Have students push their bodies or a peer's body onto a large therapy ball for proprioceptive input.
- 16) **Desk Push-Offs** – Teach students to push their desks away with their hands, providing organizing deep pressure through the arms and shoulders.
- 17) **Rope Pulling** – Have students engage in a rope-pulling activity to activate upper body and core muscles.
- 18) **Wheelbarrow Walking** – Support students in wheelbarrow walking, where they walk on their hands while an adult holds their legs.
- 19) **Clapping Patterns** – Use rhythmic clapping games to organize sensory input through repetition and sound.
- 20) **Marching or Walking with Weights** – Allow students to wear ankle or wrist weights while walking or marching in place.
- 21) **Balloon Volleyball** – Play balloon volleyball where students push and hit a balloon back and forth, engaging motor control.
- 22) **Beanbag Tossing** – Encourage students to toss beanbags into a basket or target for both motor coordination and proprioceptive input.
- 23) **Passing Heavy Objects** – Have students pass a weighted object like a ball or book around the circle, engaging multiple senses.
- 24) **Jumping on a Trampoline or Foam Mat** – Let students jump on a mini-trampoline or foam mat to provide organizing movement and muscle input.
- 25) **Building with Heavy Blocks** – Use heavy wooden or foam blocks for building, allowing students to lift, stack, and organize materials.

SENSORY IMPACT:

Organizing activities provide the deep proprioceptive input that helps students regulate their sensory systems, improving their ability to focus and engage in learning.



ALERTING ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM

SENSORY IMPLICATIONS:

Students with sensory processing differences may have difficulty regulating their sensory input, making it hard for them to stay alert or focused. Engaging in alerting activities helps "wake up" their bodies and brains by stimulating the nervous system in ways that promote attention and readiness for learning. These activities can activate the vestibular, proprioceptive, or tactile systems, increasing alertness levels. Without this sensory input, students with sensory processing differences might feel sluggish, disconnected, or overly distracted, making it hard for them to engage in academic tasks or classroom routines. Alerting activities, like movement breaks, bouncing on a therapy ball, or using fidget tools, can help improve their focus and participation by bringing their sensory systems into a more optimal state for learning.

ALERTING ACTIVITIES:

- 1) **Movement Breaks** – Give students regular breaks to engage in physical activity like jumping jacks, running in place, or walking around the room.
- 2) **Bouncing on Therapy Balls** – Allow students to sit on therapy balls instead of chairs, promoting gentle bouncing movements.
- 3) **Use of Wobble Stools** – Provide wobble stools that allow students to rock or sway while sitting, keeping them engaged.
- 4) **Jumping on a Mini Trampoline** – If space permits, have students take turns jumping on a mini trampoline for vestibular input.
- 5) **Chair Push-Ups** – Teach students to push up on the sides of their chairs with their hands, activating their muscles and improving focus. **Stretching Exercises**** – Incorporate quick stretching routines, such as reaching for the ceiling or touching toes, to stimulate the body.
- 6) **Running or Walking in Place** – Have students run or walk in place for a short burst of energy.
- 7) **Fidget Tools** – Provide fidget tools like spinners, stress balls, or putty to keep hands active during seated work.
- 8) **Using a Sit and Spin** – Use a sit-and-spin toy (if available) to provide spinning vestibular input, which can help "wake up" the brain.
- 9) **Wall Push-Ups** – Have students push against a wall to engage their muscles and increase proprioceptive input.
- 10) **Marching** – Let students march to upbeat music as a fun, energizing activity.
- 11) **Tactile Activities** – Offer tactile objects like textured toys, sandpaper, or fabric swatches for sensory exploration.
- 12) **Clapping Rhythms** – Use rhythmic clapping exercises to engage students' auditory and proprioceptive systems.



ALERTING ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM – PAGE 2

ALERTING ACTIVITIES:

- 13) **Quick Obstacle Course** – Set up a simple obstacle course in the classroom with chairs, cones, or stepping stones to get students moving.
- 14) **Use of a Scooter Board** – Let students ride on a scooter board for a short burst of proprioceptive and vestibular input.
- 15) **Ball Tossing or Catching** – Engage students in a game of tossing or catching a ball to improve focus and coordination.
- 16) **Blowing Bubbles** – Let students blow bubbles, which requires controlled breathing and focus, while visually stimulating.
- 17) **Use of Resistance Bands** – Provide resistance bands for students to pull and stretch, engaging their muscles and promoting proprioceptive input.
- 18) **Toe Tapping or Foot Stomping** – Encourage students to tap their toes or stomp their feet rhythmically for a quick energy boost.
- 19) **Hand Clapping Games** – Use hand clapping games or partner hand tapping games to engage both sides of the brain.
- 20) **Squeeze Toys** – Offer students small squeeze toys that provide deep pressure input to the hands and fingers.
- 21) **Body Tapping** – Teach students to tap different parts of their bodies (like shoulders, knees, and feet) to increase body awareness and wakefulness.
- 22) **High Knees** – Have students practice high-knee marching, bringing their knees up to their chest for proprioceptive input.
- 23) **Jumping on Foam Mats** – If you have foam or cushioned mats, let students jump up and down on them for added sensory input and movement.
- 24) **Dancing** – Let students dance to upbeat music as a fun, energizing activity.

SENSORY IMPACT:

Alerting activities can help energize students and increase their focus, making them more ready to participate in classroom activities.



CLASSROOM MOVEMENT IDEAS FOR TEACHERS

SENSORY IMPLICATIONS:

Students with sensory processing differences and an increased need for movement often have difficulty filtering and responding appropriately to sensory stimuli. Movement activities and breaks can help these students regulate their sensory systems by providing proprioceptive and vestibular input, which helps them stay calm, focused, and organized. For students with attention and impulsivity issues, the movement also allows them to release built-up energy, improving their ability to concentrate during academic tasks. Additionally, these breaks can reset their attention, reduce sensory overload, and improve their capacity to engage in learning by meeting their sensory needs more effectively.

CLASSROOM MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES:

- 1) **Animal Walks** – (for younger students) Have students walk like animals (e.g., bear crawl, crab walk, frog jumps) to provide proprioceptive and vestibular input.
- 2) **Chair Push-Ups** – Encourage students to push up from their chairs using their arms to engage their muscles.
- 3) **Wall Push-Ups** – Students can stand and press their hands against a wall, pushing their bodies away in a controlled manner.
- 4) **Jumping Jacks** – Lead the class in jumping jacks to help release energy and provide quick movement.
- 5) **Yoga Poses** – Incorporate simple yoga poses like "tree pose" or "downward dog" for a calming stretch and balance practice.
- 6) **Wiggle Breaks** – Allow students to stand up and wiggle their entire bodies to release built-up tension.
- 7) **Stretching Breaks** – Include stretching activities like reaching for the ceiling, side bends, or toe touches to re-energize.
- 8) **Marching in Place** – Encourage students to march in place, bringing their knees up high with each step.
- 9) **Obstacle Course** – Create a simple obstacle course with chairs, desks, or cones for students to crawl under, hop over, or weave through.
- 10) **Balance on One Foot** – Challenge students to balance on one foot for as long as they can, then switch feet.
- 11) **Desk Scavenger Hunt** – Have students search their desks or classroom for specific objects while incorporating movement.
- 12) **Body Part Scavenger Hunt** – Call out body parts (e.g., "touch your toes," "touch your nose") for students to locate in a fun movement game.
- 13) **Movement Dice Game** – Use a dice that lists different physical activities on each side (e.g., hop, skip, jump), and roll it to choose the next movement break.
- 14) **Hopping on One Foot** – Have students hop in place on one foot and then switch to the other to release energy and engage in focused movement.

FLEXIBLE SEATING IDEAS FOR THE CLASSROOM

SENSORY IMPLICATIONS:

From a sensory processing perspective, flexible seating can support both students with sensory processing differences and those who struggle with sustained attention by offering movement and sensory input that helps regulate their systems. Flexible seating can provide sensory feedback, such as input for vestibular (movement) or proprioceptive (body awareness). This movement can increase alertness and concentration, improving engagement in tasks. These flexible seating options allow students to choose how they sit and engage with their learning environment, helping them regulate their sensory needs.

FLEXIBLE SEATING IDEAS:

- 1) **Therapy Balls (Stability Balls)** – Students can sit and gently bounce to get vestibular input while staying seated.
- 2) **Wobble Stools** – These stools allow students to rock and move, engaging their core muscles and promoting active sitting.
- 3) **Bean Bag Chairs** – Soft and comfortable, bean bags provide deep pressure input and a relaxing place to sit.
- 4) **Floor Cushions or Pillows** – Allow students to sit on large floor cushions or pillows for a comfortable, alternative seating option.
- 5) **Standing Desks** – Adjustable-height desks enable students to stand while working, reducing the need for sitting.
- 6) **Rocking Chairs** – Rocking chairs provide rhythmic movement that can help students calm their sensory systems.
- 7) **Bungee Chairs** – These chairs offer a bouncy, flexible seating option that allows movement and comfort.
- 8) **Kneeling Pads or Mats** – Students can kneel on cushioned pads or mats to work at lower tables, offering proprioceptive input.
- 9) **Portable Lap Desks** – Lightweight lap desks allow students to sit anywhere in the classroom while still having a surface to write on.
- 10) **Hokki Stools** – These stools wobble, providing continuous movement that engages students' bodies while they work.
- 11) **T-Stools** – A simple, single-leg stool that challenges balance, engaging students' core and encouraging movement.
- 12) **Scoop Rockers** – Plastic, floor-level chairs that allow students to rock slightly while sitting on the ground.
- 13) **Standing Balance Boards** – Students can stand on balance boards that offer gentle, rocking movement while they work.
- 14) **Foam Blocks** – Soft foam blocks can be used as low, alternative seating for students who prefer sitting closer to the ground.
- 15) **Flexible Floor Seats with Backs** – Floor chairs with back support allow students to sit comfortably on the floor with some mobility.



ACTIVITIES TO HELP WITH TRANSITIONS

SENSORY IMPLICATIONS:

Students with sensory processing differences often have difficulty transitioning between activities and classrooms because their brains struggle to process and organize sensory information effectively. These transitions introduce new sensory stimuli—like different lighting, sounds, smells, or even the movement required to change locations—which can overwhelm their sensory systems. Additionally, these students may have trouble shifting attention from one task to another, making transitions even more challenging.

ACTIVITIES TO HELP WITH TRANSITIONS:

- 1) **Use a Visual Schedule** – Provide a clear visual schedule showing the day's activities so students can anticipate transitions in advance.
- 2) **Countdown Timers** – Use a countdown timer or a visual timer to prepare students for upcoming transitions.
- 3) **Transitional Object** – Allow students to carry a familiar object (e.g., a small toy or fidget) from one activity or location to the next.
- 4) **Transition Songs** – Play a specific song to signal a transition; the predictability of the song helps students prepare mentally.
- 5) **Deep Breathing Before Moving** – Practice deep breathing exercises before transitioning to help calm their nervous system.
- 6) **Provide Movement Breaks** – Give students a short, physical movement break (e.g., stretching or jumping) before transitioning to the next activity.
- 7) **Use of Sensory Tools** – Let students use sensory tools, like weighted vests or fidget toys, to ease anxiety during transitions.
- 8) **First-Then Language** – Use "First-Then" statements to clarify the upcoming activity (e.g., "First we clean up, then we go to recess").
- 9) **Create a Transition Ritual** – Develop a consistent, calming ritual before each transition, such as a specific phrase, clapping pattern, or breathing exercise.
- 10) **Social Stories** – Read social stories that outline the transition process and what students can expect, especially in new situations.
- 11) **Break Tasks Into Steps** – Break transitions into small, manageable steps and give specific, clear instructions (e.g., "First put away your pencil, then line up").
- 12) **Calming Visuals** – Use calming visuals (like soft lights or nature scenes) to cue a transition and reduce sensory overload.
- 13) **Quiet Time Before Transition** – Allow a few minutes of quiet time before transition to help students wind down and prepare for the upcoming change.
- 14) **Assign Transition Jobs** – Give students specific roles during transitions (e.g., line leader or materials helper) to help them stay engaged and focused.
- 15) **Body Awareness Activities** – Encourage students to engage in body awareness activities (like pushing a wall or doing chair push-ups) before or after transitions to ground themselves.

SENSORY BOTTLES

SENSORY IMPLICATIONS:

Watching sensory bottles can help calm students by providing a controlled, predictable visual and tactile experience. This activity engages their senses in a soothing manner, offering a break from overwhelming stimuli. The slow, repetitive movement of objects in a sensory bottle promotes focus and relaxation by regulating the nervous system, reducing hyper-alertness, and promoting a sense of calm. By allowing students to "reset" their sensory system, these breaks can help them return to academic tasks feeling more grounded and focused. To make sensory bottles for students, here is a step-by-step guide:

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Clear plastic bottles (water bottles or Voss bottles work well)
- Clear glue or glitter glue (for a more shimmering effect)
- Water
- Glitter (optional for visual interest)
- Small decorative objects (beads, sequins, etc.)
- Food coloring (optional)
- Superglue or hot glue gun (to seal the bottle lid)



DIRECTIONS:

1. Prepare the Bottle: Clean the plastic bottle and remove any labels. Ensure it is completely dry before using it.
2. Fill the Bottle with Water and Glue: Add clear glue or glitter glue to the bottle. Start with about 1/4 of the bottle filled with glue. The more glue, the slower the objects will move. Add warm water to fill the rest of the bottle. Leave a little space at the top so the objects can move freely.
3. Add Glitter and Decorative Objects: If desired, add a small amount of glitter and decorative objects like small beads, sequins, or themed items (like stars or shells). These will float and create visual interest.
4. Add Food Coloring (Optional): Add a drop or two of food coloring to color the water. Mix carefully to distribute the color evenly.
5. Seal the Bottle: Once satisfied with the contents, seal the lid tightly using superglue or a hot glue gun. This prevents students from accidentally opening the bottle and spilling its contents.
6. Test and Adjust: Before fully sealing, test the bottle by turning it upside down and shaking it. If you want the objects to move more slowly, add more glue. For faster movement, add more water.
7. Seal and Shake: Once sealed, shake the bottle well to ensure everything moves as you want.

These sensory bottles are now ready to use!
They can help students calm down, refocus, or
take a sensory break during the day.

ABOUT POSITIVELY MOXIE

Molly (a junior high school counselor and former elementary school teacher) and Jill (a school-based occupational therapist) have teamed up to empower teachers, counselors, therapists, and parents who want to teach young people the skills to better coach their brains for greater well-being and resilience.

The science of positive psychology, counseling techniques, self-regulation, cognitive behavioral therapy, sensory processing, executive functioning, and brain science influences us! We understand our students and youth need as many “tools” in their toolbox as we can give them.

Molly and Jill are passionate about creating relevant, high-quality, and actionable resources to address well-being and resilience skills for students!



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Special Education / Sensory Room
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Mindfulness YOGA CARDS
INCLUDES 26 YOGA POSES IN COLOR & B/W WITH CLEAR WRITURES & PICTURES & DESCRIPTIONS

GROWTH MINDSET & MINDFULNESS SUPER BUNDLE 10 LESSONS

BUNDLE 1
GROWTH MINDSET
Teaching Mindfulness to Kids
Teaching Mindfulness to Kids

BUNDLE 2
MINDFULNESS
Teaching Mindfulness to Kids
Teaching Mindfulness to Kids
Teaching Mindfulness to Kids

KINDNESS, EMPATHY, & GRATITUDE SUPER BUNDLE 9 LESSONS

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KINDNESS
Teaching Kindness to Kids
Teaching Kindness to Kids

Teaching GRATITUDE
THE FEELINGS OF GRATITUDE

BUNDLE 2
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Teaching Empathy to Kids

Teaching GRATITUDE
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ROAD OF RESILIENCE
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BUNDLE KINDNESS

Teaching KINDNESS
BECOMING INCLUSIVE
ACTIVITIES TO CULTIVATE A KINDNESS CULTURE

Teaching KINDNESS
SENSING KINDNESS IN OUR BODIES
ACTIVITIES TO CULTIVATE A KINDNESS CULTURE

Teaching KINDNESS
RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS
Engaging & reflective activities for students to create individual and 2-voice poetry

Teaching KINDNESS
"I AM" & "I AM FROM" POEMS
Engaging & reflective activities for students to create individual and 2-voice poetry

GOOGLE SLIDES™ Format Included!