

# Green Chimneys Sensory Space Handbook



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# What is Sensory Modulation?

One of the essential elements of self-organization includes the way we modulate incoming sensory and motor information within the central nervous system. As we become more aware of the different strategies we tend to use and do to self-organize, in order to functionally engage in meaningful life activities, we become more aware of our unique system tendencies and preferences and of the repertoire of activities used to self-organize.

In this way, the relevance of sensory modulation strategies becomes increasingly apparent, particularly when working with individuals experiencing escalating symptoms and among those in dynamic crisis states. Within the occupational therapy literature, sensory modulation is referred to as the ability to organize and regulate one's responses to sensory and motor stimulation in a graded and adaptive manner (Bundy, Lane & Murray, 2002).

## **Potential Benefits of Sensory Modulation**

The following is a list of examples of some of the potential benefits from the use of individualized sensory modulation strategies:

- ◆ Increased self-understanding
- ◆ Increased ability to self-nurture
- ◆ Increased resilience
- ◆ Increased self-esteem
- ◆ Increased ability to engage in therapeutic & social activities
- ◆ Increased ability to engage in self-care activities
- ◆ Increased ability to engage in meaningful life roles
- ◆ Increased ability to cope with triggers

## Rules of the Space



### ◆ **Be Respectful!**

Follow all guidelines and staff directions about using tools/items in the space

### ◆ **Clean Up After Yourself**

- Throw out all garbage
- Place tools/items in their appropriate spots before leaving
- Sanitize hands before and after visiting

### ◆ **Safety First, Always**

- Stack mats when crashing
- No food or drink while crashing or spinning
- STOP what you are doing if you feel sick or dizzy

### ◆ **Leave shows in the hallway before entering the space**

Hang up coats, hats or bags in hallway as well

### ◆ **Sign in and out EVERY time you use the space**

Be mindful that the form is completed appropriately

### ◆ **Only TWO students allowed in the room at a time**

Be mindful of the sensory processing difficulties of each student in the room

### ◆ **Staff ONLY allowed in the office**

No Exceptions to this rule!!

## Purpose of the Space

- ◆ **De-escalate students in pre-crisis situations**
  - Progressive relaxation strategies
  - Places emphasis on regulation through senses vs. verbal exchanges
  
- ◆ **Allow students to internally regulate**
  - Stress reduction
  - Mindfulness/Self-soothing exercises
  - Increase insight into changing levels of arousal/mood
  
- ◆ **Assist students in developing independent abilities and coping skills**
  - Explore/identify tools or movements that are calming
  - Practice, Practice, Practice!
  
- ◆ **Reduce Restraints**
  - Sensory interventions are one of the Six Core Strategies To Prevent Conflict and Violence

## Benefit of the Space



**Self-esteem**  
**Self-understanding**  
**Self-awareness**  
**Resilience**



**Crisis**  
**Stress**  
**Avoidance**  
**Restraints**

## Precautions



- ◆ **NEVER** use spin disc with a child that has seizure disorder
- ◆ Spinning can cause dizziness, sickness and/or stimulation
- ◆ Crash area should be built up (stack bean bags, put out floor mats) to ensure safety
- ◆ Only one student at a time in any tent
- ◆ Watch closely to ensure the activity is having the desired affect! **Stop a child** that is getting too overstimulated or that looks sick
- ◆ All staff/students should use sanitizer entering/exiting
- ◆ Students wishing to use “active” equipment should change into non-slip socks

**\*\*Remember\*\***

*Activities that are calming for one,  
may be alerting for others.*

# Sign In/Out Procedure

Sign in and out every time you use the space.

Planned	Pre-Crisis	Post-Crisis	Questionable Near Miss (Y/N?)	Comments

*"Questionable near miss" should be filled in "Yes" when a staff member feels as if a child may have escalated to the point of a restraint/major incident, but was avoided by using the sensory space/tools.*

Tools Used Independently	Tools Offered AND Child Used
<input type="checkbox"/> Body Sock <input type="checkbox"/> Coloring <input type="checkbox"/> Crash Pad <input type="checkbox"/> Dimmer on light switch <input type="checkbox"/> Essential Oil Diffuser <input type="checkbox"/> Fidget Toy <input type="checkbox"/> Gum / Mints <input type="checkbox"/> iPod with Music <input type="checkbox"/> I-Spy Books <input type="checkbox"/> Lava Lamp <input type="checkbox"/> Lotion / Hand Sanitizer <input type="checkbox"/> Magic Sand <input type="checkbox"/> Marble Panel <input type="checkbox"/> Noise Canceling Headphones <input type="checkbox"/> Pilates Ring <input type="checkbox"/> Puzzles <input type="checkbox"/> Rainstick <input type="checkbox"/> Rocking Chair / Swivel Chairs (circle one) <input type="checkbox"/> Spin Disk / Spring Board (circle one) <input type="checkbox"/> Stepping Stones <input type="checkbox"/> Theraputty / Fidget toys <input type="checkbox"/> Therapy Brushes <input type="checkbox"/> Tent - regular or Blackout (circle one) <input type="checkbox"/> Weighted (and unweighted) stuffed items <input type="checkbox"/> Yoga Mats / Yoga Ball (circle one) <input type="checkbox"/> Zen Garden <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Body Sock <input type="checkbox"/> Coloring <input type="checkbox"/> Crash Pad <input type="checkbox"/> Dimmer on light switch <input type="checkbox"/> Essential Oil Diffuser <input type="checkbox"/> Fidget Toy <input type="checkbox"/> Gum / Mints <input type="checkbox"/> iPod with Music <input type="checkbox"/> I-Spy Books <input type="checkbox"/> Lava Lamp <input type="checkbox"/> Lotion / Hand Sanitizer <input type="checkbox"/> Magic Sand <input type="checkbox"/> Marble Panel <input type="checkbox"/> Noise Canceling Headphones <input type="checkbox"/> Pilates Ring <input type="checkbox"/> Puzzles <input type="checkbox"/> Rainstick <input type="checkbox"/> Rocking Chair / Swivel Chairs (circle one) <input type="checkbox"/> Spin Disk / Spring Board (circle one) <input type="checkbox"/> Stepping Stones <input type="checkbox"/> Theraputty / Fidget Toys <input type="checkbox"/> Therapy Brushes <input type="checkbox"/> Tent - regular or Blackout (circle one) <input type="checkbox"/> Weighted (and unweighted) stuffed items <input type="checkbox"/> Yoga Mats / Yoga Ball (circle one) <input type="checkbox"/> Zen Garden <input type="checkbox"/> Other

# Getting in “Just the Right Zone”

**FOR STUDENT TO COMPLETE:** (with help from staff if necessary. Child can identify a color, number or feeling from the chart on the Sensory Space door)

Time In: \_\_\_\_\_ Thermometer Rating: \_\_\_\_\_

Time Out: \_\_\_\_\_ Thermometer Rating: \_\_\_\_\_

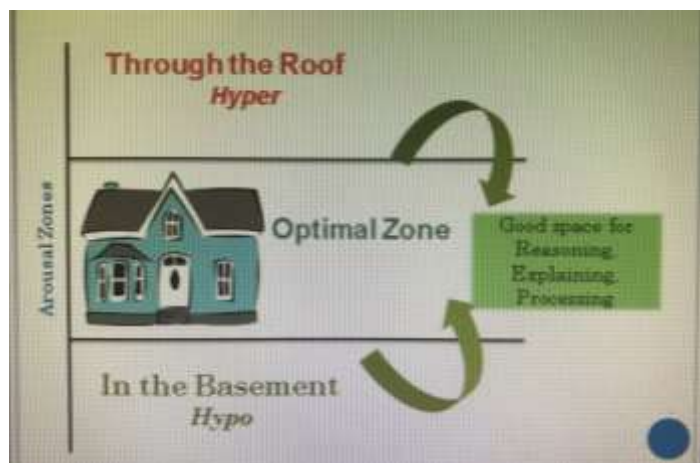
**Staff Rating of Student (feeling thermometer, based on observation)**

Arrival: \_\_\_\_\_ Departure: \_\_\_\_\_

Feelings Thermometer that the students will use both upon entering and leaving the sensory space.



Students are better able to process, reason and explain situations/emotions in the Optimal Zone.





# Utilizing the Sensory Space Calendar

Time	Table 1	Table 2	STAFF CONTINGENCY
7:00am			
7:30am			
8am			5-5:30pm Staff
8:30am			6-6:30pm Staff
9:00am	OPEN Transition Time		Clinical Supervise
9:30am			CC Supervise
10:00am			8-9am Staff
10:30am			
11:00am			9-10am Staff
11:30am			10-11am Staff
12:00pm	OPEN Transition Time		11-12pm Staff
12:30pm			12-1:30pm Staff
1:00pm			12-1pm Staff
1:30pm			4pm-5pm Staff
2:00pm			
2:30pm			
3:00pm			
3:30pm			
4:00pm			
4:30pm			
5:00pm			
5:30pm			
6:00pm			
6:30pm			
7:00pm			

Sample Calendar

- ◆ Tabs along the bottom of the Excel page indicate/select days
- ◆ “Open Transition Times” should not be used for individual sessions
- ◆ Colored blocks are “supervised” times, see sidebar for which staff is supervising the space at any given time
- ◆ Social workers – can use for individual sessions or pre-crisis situations
- ◆ Other Direct Care Staff – can schedule time slots, visit the space for coping skill practice or use for pre-crisis situations
- ◆ All are encouraged to use timers to help direct their sessions

## 4 Types of Sensory Processing Difficulties

*Sensory differences are all INDIVIDUAL. It is important to remember that a child might be sensory seeking at times, but sensory avoidant at others.*

### Sensory Seeking

#### Signs

- Always moving
- Needs MORE sensory input to focus and stay on task
- Takes a lot of risks
- Appears uncoordinated/clumsy
- High pain tolerance

#### Associated Behaviors

- Impulsive/difficulty paying attention
- Can become overstimulated
- May make poor decisions
- Frequently trips or drops things

#### Possible Interventions

- Soft, soothing music
- Low lighting for calming; use of marble panel, LED cube, liquid timer
- Laying down, having staff roll yoga ball over the child
- Use of weighted items (20 minutes at a time)
- Controlled spinning (for example, 10 times in one direction, 10 times in other direction)

# Sensory Avoiding

## Signs

- Easily over stimulated/aroused
- May be quiet or withdrawn
- Very aware of surroundings
- May appear fearful or uncooperative
- Needs predictability and consistency

## Associated Behaviors

- Actively avoids overstimulation
- Not participating in activities
- Difficulty concentrating/focusing
- Refusing to do activities
- Difficulty transitioning

## Possible Interventions

- Breaks in blackout tent
- Exposure to new sensory input should be slow and controlled by the child (environment, smell, touch, taste)
- Noise canceling headphones
- Use of stepping stones to “organize” and focus

## Sensory Sensitive

### Signs

- Easily over stimulated/aroused (low threshold)
- May seem to overreact
- Needs predictability and consistency

### Associated Behaviors

- Difficulty focusing/easily distracted
- Negative reactions that may seem "out of context"
- Difficulty transitioning

### Possible Interventions

- Noise canceling headphones
- Low lighting
- Visual schedule / reminders
- Less verbal prompts (non-verbal or written directions and cues)
- Weighted items and/or tent for calming

## Low Registration

### Signs

- Seems lethargic or uninterested
- Needs MORE intense, frequent, and varied sensory input to remain on task

### Associated Behaviors

- Laying head on desk
- Difficulty attending
- Drags during activities, avoids interactions

### Possible Interventions

- Bright lighting
- Breaks for physical activity
- Use of crash pad, bounce disc, spin disc
- Loud, alerting music
- Fireballs, spicy or bright flavored items (lemon or orange slices)

# Alternative Activities if Space is in Use



## ***What do I do?***

*If the room is in use / not available / staff is not present to take a child / we are on Tom's Trail / etc.*

## **Sensory Tools around Campus**

- Sensory carts in the dorms and classrooms
- Sensory baskets in conference rooms and offices
- Alternative seating in dorms and classrooms

## **Achieving Sensory Input around Campus**

- Swings
- Bikes
- Visiting the farm or the garden (smelling flowers)
- Walking on Tom's Trail
- Coloring books, I Spy, mindfulness
- Yoga or movement breaks
- Spinning in a chair
- Making a tent / place to "hide"
- Making tea
- Do-it-yourself sensory tools  
(water bottle glitter timer, stress ball, gel pad, rice bowl)

## **Calming/Organizing Input**

- Wrapping in a heavy quilt
- Hot shower
- Rocking or steadily swinging
- Slow rhythmic motions or humming/sing quietly
- Soft/low lighting and soft/slow music
- Soothing scents (oils/lotions/candles)
- Deep pressure touch, massage, or strong hugs
- Yoga
- Leisure walks

## **Alerting/Grounding Input**

- Holding ice
- Sour or fireball candies
- Rapid and/or jerky movements
- Cold water/washcloth to face
- A cool room
- Unexpected visual stimuli
- Changing patterns of light/bright
- Quick paced/offbeat music
- Alerting sounds of nature (birds)
- Holding ice
- Sour or fireball candies
- Rapid and/or jerky movements
- Cold water/washcloth to face
- A cool room
- Unexpected visual stimuli
- Changing patterns of light/bright
- Quick paced/offbeat music
- Alerting sounds of nature (birds)

## Videotaping & Consent Forms

- ◆ Make sure the child you are working with has a video consent form on file (in the student's file on the computer, and/or check with social worker).
- ◆ Sign on to the sensory office laptop.
- ◆ If the camera does not immediately pop up click on the "Axis Camera Station Client" icon on the desktop.
- ◆ A large image of the room should appear on the main screen.
- ◆ If the video image does not appear, click the computer screen icon in the top left corner.
- ◆ To begin recording, move the mouse to the top right corner of the video screen, and a "REC" button should appear. Click this button once.
- ◆ To stop recording, move the mouse to the top right corner again and hit the "STOP" button.
- ◆ To review playback, click the film reel icon in the top left corner. That will show video from that day. You cannot delete video or export video from this screen.
- ◆ Please only review video from this location. Further instruction on video editing/exporting will be provided to you by the committee.
- ◆ Please make sure that you click back on the computer icon to bring up the main video screen before leaving the space. Double check that the camera is NOT recording when you leave the room.



*Example of the consent form that needs to be in the child's folder:*

**CONSENT FOR VIDEOTAPING SESSIONS**

**CHILD'S NAME/  
FAMILY NAME**

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**THERAPIST**

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The following consent is requested because Green Chimneys uses recorded materials as part of the teaching and learning process for clinicians. Use of recorded materials is also used by therapists to review treatment.

**GENERAL CONSENT FOR RECORDING AND USE OF RECORDING MATERIALS**

I (we) the undersigned consent to the video and/or audio tape recording of sessions of myself (ourselves) and my (our) children. Unless additional consent is obtained, recordings will be used only for teaching and review of treatment by Institute staff and students.

I understand this consent form will remain in effect until I revoke it in writing or until the recording is erased. To revoke this consent, I must send a letter to the Privacy Officer of Green Chimneys.

Recorded materials may be erased after their use and do not become a permanent part of the treatment record.

**DATE**

**SIGNED**

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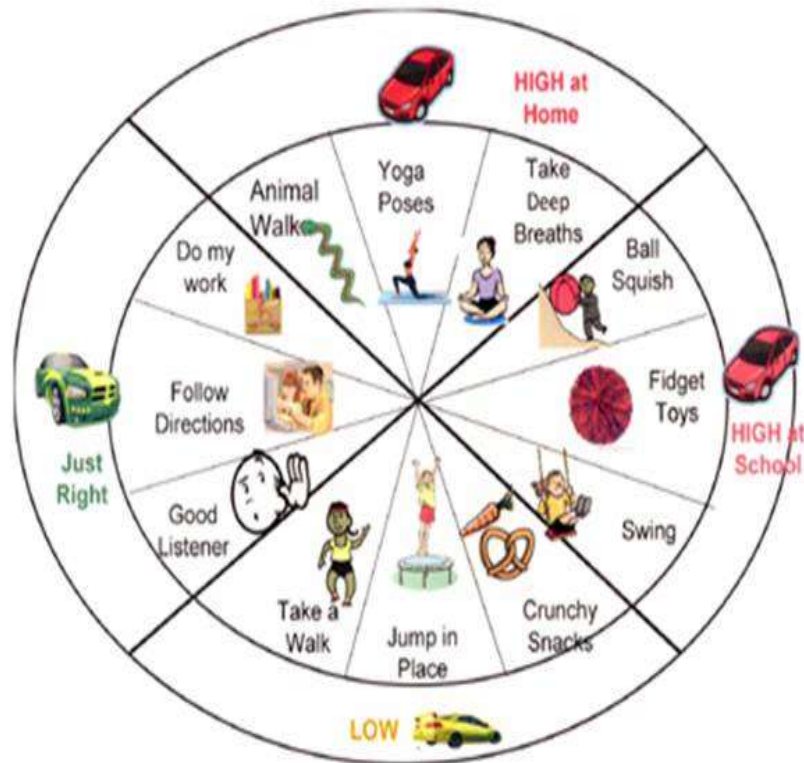
**THERAPIST**

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# Sensory Diet: A Team Approach

- ◆ Environmental: where the child is struggling
- ◆ Schedule: when the child is struggling
- ◆ Sensory Interventions: what works for the child
  - Empower staff to help individual students with sensory needs to self-regulate with tools
  - Improve generalization of skills learned in OT, ST, SW sessions and in the sensory space → to both the classroom and dorm
  - Facilitate dialog between students, staff and related services to address the student's sensory behaviors and needs
- ◆ Communicate with team members!
  - Review observations during Treatment Review Times
  - Set up a collaborative consult to view video footage of the child using the space
  - Add information regarding helpful tools/interventions to a child's Individualized Crisis Management Plan, Treatment Plans, etc.

## Example of a Sensory Diet Appropriate at Home and School for Various Levels of Arousal:



### Make a Sensory Diet work in school

- Deep pressure massage at home before leaving
- At 1-hour intervals (be specific here) take walks (10 or more minutes)
- Pace and/or use fidget toys during class
- Sensory friendly place somewhere in the school.
- Allow headphones/music while working
- Provide chew toys or objects
- Schedule 2 times/day in gym for jumping (10 minutes or more) – morning or afternoon
- If swings or other vestibular activities are possible, add them too