

Occupational Therapy Newsletter

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Fall 2018 Edition: Sensory Processing and Self-Regulation

What is Self-Regulation?

Self-regulation refers to the ability to achieve, sustain and adjust one's level of alertness to meet the demands of activities and situations as they change.

It is directly related to:

- academic performance
- social interaction
- positive behaviors
- overall well-being
- engagement in learning



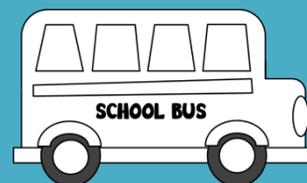
Kids with good self-regulation can pay attention to classroom activities and ignore distractions, remember the teacher's directions long enough to carry out a task and resist impulses.

What Does Sensory Processing Have To Do With Self-Regulation?

We are all unique sensory beings and respond to what we feel, see, hear, touch and how we move in our own ways. How we process sensory information (**sensory processing**) often influences how we **self-regulate** our emotions and behavior.

Did You Know...

In addition to the five best known senses – taste, touch, hearing, sight and smell, there are also two others that play an important role in a child's development – the **proprioception** and **vestibular** systems. According to Dr. Jean Ayres, PhD, OTR, the tactile, proprioceptive and vestibular senses are the "Big 3" for kids with sensory dysfunction. The other senses can't work properly if the Big 3 aren't doing their job. The Big 3 are also referred to as "The Power Senses."



Exploring The Power Senses



The Vestibular System - your body's internal GPS system! In its simplest form, vestibular input is the sensation of any change in position, direction, or movement of the head. If you're a child who is processing this information appropriately, you are able to move with control, balance and safety. Dysfunction can present as hypo or hyper responsive and, much like the other sensory systems, a child may exhibit behaviors of both.

The Proprioceptive System - informs us of our body position in space. Receptors for this system are located primarily in our muscles, relaying information on muscle length and tension. Signs of difficulty may present as frequent crashing, bumping, and misjudging force.

The Tactile System (or sense of touch) - refers to the information we receive through the receptors in our skin. From very early on, this sense plays a crucial role in helping us gain awareness of our own bodies and understand everything we come in contact with. Dysfunction can affect body awareness, motor planning, and even social/emotional development.

Power Senses, Activated! Sensory Activities for Regulation

Vestibular

Swinging, jumping on trampolines, games like freeze dance, spinning, riding on a bicycle and hanging upside down all activate the vestibular system

Proprioceptive

Bear hugs, massages, animal walks (e.g. crab walk, bear walk), carrying/lifting/pushing boxes, trampoline, kneading playdough all activate the proprioceptive system.

Tactile

Sensory bins filled with rice/beans/water beads/kinetic sand, finger painting, tight squeezes, getting squished between pillows, rolled up in a blanket like a burrito, weighted blanket.

*all information is merely a suggestion and should be used as a resource, contact your child's OT for activities specific to your child's needs.

