

Making Sense!

A Guide to Helping with Sensory Issues during Lockdown



What are our senses and what do they do?

Our senses are the systems our body has that give us information about ourselves and the world, so that we can go about our day-to-day lives, even when we are stuck inside on Lockdown! They include...

- Vision
- Hearing
- Smell
- Taste
- Touch
- Vestibular - (helps with balance and movement)
- Proprioception – (tells your body where it is without looking)
- Interoception – (internal messages like hunger, temperature, pain)

We all use these senses all of the time. Without our senses, we would not be able to interact with the world, (or the in the case of Lockdown, interact with your house)!



We receive information via our senses and then our brain figures out what to do with it. Sometimes, this gets figured out just fine....We can make sense of the things that we see, we can move as we need to, we can enjoy tastes and smells, and so on. However, sometimes, things don't work quite as smoothly!

What happens when things don't work so smoothly?

Sometimes, we can't seem to get enough from our bodies and the world around us to be able to stay calm and alert. You might find yourself feeling tired and zoning-out. You might not register your parent calling your name, even if they are in the same room as you! This might especially be a problem on Lockdown, if you are stuck inside the house a lot.



Or your body might respond to this by seeking sensations. For example, you might be much more fidgety than usual and have difficulties sitting still. You might have the urge to jump up and down on the sofa all day! Or to make funny or loud noises.



If you're anxious or worried about things, such as school-work or the virus, you might find that your sensory system goes on 'high alert'. For example, noises might hurt your ears more, your clothes might seem really scratchy, or you might find the bright sunshine makes your eyes ache. All these sensations can then make you feel worse and more stressed-out and it can be a vicious circle.



Or you might find you are a bit of a mixture of all of these things and that this changes throughout the day. And you will probably feel quite different from one day to the next.



What can you do to help?

SQUASHES AND MOVEMENT!

Deep-pressure touch can help us to regulate our systems. And linear vestibular movement, i.e. back and forth or up and down, can also help. **Build this into your daily routine** to help you to stay regulated, and feel calm and alert.

...Check out our two videos on the Sensory Service page of the Sheffield Children's Hospital website that show you some really easy ways of how to do this!



EXERCISE

Regular heavy physical work and exercise are **really important** to help our sensory systems stay on track. Make sure you do this EVERY DAY during lockdown.



VISUAL TIME-TABLE

Your usual routine will have totally changed since Lockdown. However, creating a routine is still important. Use simple picture cards to create a time-table of your day. This is a really good way to help keep us calm, which will help prevent your senses from going into 'high-alert' mode. Even if you have a good understanding of your daily routine, seeing it mapped out clearly can still help to reduce anxiety.

...Have a look at the following video of our Therapy team, which gives you some more ideas:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y829YzuyDDs>

SAFE-SPACE

If you are finding Lockdown stressful, especially being all under one roof all of the time, see if you can create a 'safe-space' that you can retreat to when things get a bit too much. This might be a make-shift den or a small section of your room that is for you only, (no siblings or parents allowed)!! If possible, it's a place where it's not too noisy and where you don't have lots of toys and clutter. This is your 'chill out' space. (Mums and dads, you might want to make your own safe-space too)!!



Sensory Circuits

Aim to do a 'Sensory Circuit' at least twice a day whilst on Lockdown; (a 'sensory circuit' can be done using the following red, green and blue activities). Choose activities to suit your space and resources:

*First, do **two** of the following red activities...*

- Bunny-hops x 12
- Jumping beans - (jump forwards with both feet together) x 12
- Frog-jumps - (squat, then jump up as high as you can) x 12
- Jump up and down on a trampoline or trampette x 12

*Then, do **two** of the following green activities...*

- Star-jumps x 12
- Throw bean-bags or soft toys at a target, (such as into a laundry basket) x 12
- Blow bubbles - (through a bubble wand) x 6 long blows
- Hopscotch - (you could draw one with chalk outside) x 6 goes
- Skipping with a rope x 12 goes round
- Wall press-ups - (stand facing a wall with your arms out straight in front and palms flat on the wall; bend your arms, bringing your nose to the wall; keep your body straight; return) x 12

Finally, do *one* of the following blue activities, for a few minutes...

- Steam-rollers - (using a gym ball, follow the instructions on the video mentioned on page 5 of this booklet)
- Hands-on squashes - (follow the instructions on the video mentioned on page 5 of this booklet)
- Hot-dogs – (lie down and wrap yourself up tightly in an exercise mat, play mat or similar. Ask an adult to slowly squash you with their hands)
- Hedgehogs – (sit on an arm-chair or sofa. Curl yourself up into a small ball, crossing your legs and hugging them as tightly as possible, with your head tucked on to your knees. Take slow deep breaths in and out).



For more information on Sensory Processing Difficulties, have a look at the useful PowerPoint videos on the Sensory Service web-page of the Sheffield Children's Hospital website.