



▶ QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER WITH AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FOCUS



▶ NEXT QUARTER— HAND-WRITING TIPS



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ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF EACH STUDENT BY PROVIDING FUNCTIONAL CLASSROOM INFORMATION

Did you know we have 7 senses? Well, we do. And did you know that we can help kids increase their attention and concentration by targeting the senses? Well, we can. I'll tell you how.



Our Senses

Auditory (Listening)

Gustatory (Taste)

Olfactory (Smell)

Proprioception (Muscle/Joints)

Tactile (Touch)

Vestibular (Balance)

Visual (Sight)

Kids need sensory breaks to help them to attend and maintain attention to activities presented in class. A sensory break allows for calming or arousal. If the children in the class are tired and disengaged, get them up and moving. This addresses the vestibular and proprioceptive senses. The movement will arouse. If the children are impulsive, fidgety and a little hyper, get them up and moving, this can help calm them. Think of the auditory sense, certain music can calm or arouse. Smells can calm or alert. Depending on the visual stimulation, it can calm or alert. An effective sensory break, when implemented currently and timely can assist in keeping the children in your classroom at the optimal status of arousal. This means they attend and maintain their attention better. In turn, means increased learning.

If you need assistance with setting up sensory breaks, contact your OT.



Symptoms WATCH

If the children in your class are super fidgety, impulsive, loud or sleepy.

These are communications that the children in your class need a sensory break.



the Alert Program® and “How Does Your Engine Run?”®

(Williams & Shellenberger, 1996)

HAVE YOU HEARD CHILDREN TALKING ABOUT THEIR “ENGINES” GOING UP INTO HIGH GEAR (HYPER) OR INTO LOW GEAR (LETHARGIC) OR IN A “JUST RIGHT” GEAR (ATTENTIVE AND FOCUSED)? IF YOU HAVEN’T YET, YOU PROBABLY WILL SOON.

WE’RE INTRODUCING THE “HOW DOES YOUR ENGINE RUN?”® THE ALERT PROGRAM® FOR SELF-REGULATION DEVELOPED BY TWO INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS, MARY SUE WILLIAMS AND SHERRY SHELLENBERGER.

BY USING THE ENGINE ANALOGY TO TEACH SELF-REGULATION (CHANGING HOW ALERT WE FEEL), WE ARE HELPING CHILDREN LEARN WHAT TO DO IF THEY ARE IN A NON-OPTIMAL STATE OF ALERTNESS. WE TEACH CHILDREN THAT THERE ARE FIVE WAYS TO CHANGE HOW ALERT WE FEEL: PUT SOMETHING IN THE MOUTH, MOVE, TOUCH, LOOK, OR LISTEN.

WE ALL SELF-REGULATE THROUGHOUT OUR DAY, BUT RARELY DO ANY OF US TALK ABOUT IT. FOR EXAMPLE, THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU DID FOR YOUR ENGINE THIS MORNING TO GET UP AND GET GOING. TO START YOUR DAY, DID YOU DRINK A HOT CUP OF COFFEE OR DRINK A COLD FRUIT SMOOTHIE (MOUTH CATEGORY)? BEFORE WORK, DID YOU GO FOR A JOG OR WALK THE DOG (MOVE CATEGORY)? TO WAKE UP, DID YOU TAKE A STEAMY HOT SHOWER OR PET YOUR CAT (TOUCH CATEGORY)? DID YOU WATCH TV (LOOK CATEGORY) OR TURN ON THE RADIO (LISTEN CATEGORY)?

WE TEACH CHILDREN HOW TO EXPAND THE USE OF THESE TYPES OF ENGINE STRATEGIES AT SCHOOL AND AT HOME TO BE IN AN OPTIMAL STATE FOR LEARNING, PLAYING, OR INTERACTING WITH THEIR FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND PEERS. WE EMPOWER CHILDREN TO KNOW WHAT TO DO IF THEIR ENGINES ARE IN LOW GEAR AND NEED TO FOCUS ON LEARNING A NEW MATH SKILL OR, IF THEIR ENGINES ARE IN HIGH GEAR, WHAT THEY CAN DO TO GET READY TO SLEEP AT NIGHT.

YOU CAN HELP TEACH SELF-REGULATION BY TALKING ABOUT YOUR OWN ENGINE. IF YOUR ENGINE IS IN A LOW SPEED WHEN YOU ARE TRYING TO READ A BOOK, OR IF IT GOES UP INTO A HIGH SPEED WHEN RUSHING TO GET TO AN APPOINTMENT, SHARE THAT WITH CHILDREN. DON’T BE SURPRISED IF CHILDREN WHO ARE LEARNING ABOUT THE ALERT PROGRAM® CONCEPTS SUGGEST AN ENGINE STRATEGY SUCH AS TAKING A DEEP BREATH (MOUTH CATEGORY), STRETCHING (MOVE CATEGORY), SQUEEZING A STRESS BALL (TOUCH CATEGORY), WATCHING THE SUNSET (LOOK CATEGORY), OR LISTENING TO MUSIC (LISTEN CATEGORY). ENCOURAGE THE USE OF ENGINE STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT SELF-REGULATION SO YOUR ENGINE AND YOUR CHILDREN’S ENGINES CAN RUN JUST RIGHT!

ENGINE LEVELS

High

Hyper, Impulsive, Fidgety, Loud
Not Listening
Not Paying Attention
Not Learning

Just Right

Listening
Learning
Paying Attention
Getting Along With Others
Doing The Right Thing

Low

Sleepy
Not Listening
Not Paying Attention
Not Learning

We want to promote accountability and an internal awareness with how kids are behaving in the classroom. One method is by verbalizing what you are observing. For example, I see that your engine levels are at the “Just Right” level. You are listening, learning, paying attention and doing the right thing. However, it might look like this; I see a lot of you in the class looking rather sleepy. Your heads are down and you are not listening, not paying attention and not learning. Why don’t we take a sensory break.