

Creating a personal sensory kit

What is a sensory kit?

- A container that holds items that are useful for coping and self-regulation
- The idea is to have items handy and available to use in the situations that are difficult for you
- Kits can take many forms, and they have many different themes or purposes

Theme

Identify a problem, symptom, or situation for which you could use a handy collection of sensory items for calming, alerting, or self-regulation. This will become the 'theme' for your kit. Examples of problems: anxiety, stress at work, staying sober, sleep difficulties, car sickness or staying awake in the car, attention difficulties, negative thinking, dissociation.

Think about the problem and the times and places that it happens

Style

Think about the ways you will use this kit and the places you will be when you will need to use it. Consider the need for portability, the need for discretion, the bulk of the items you will include, the convenience at work or best choice for the bedside. Ideas include: heavy zip lock bag, plastic or other box, pencil case, shoe box, back pack, cloth bag etc...

Items

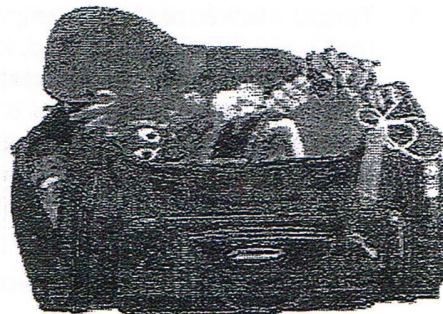
Consider the suggestions below. Brainstorm with friends and loved ones. Think about things that you know work for you and try out new ideas...

Scented hand cream
Cedar filled mini pillow
iPod/CD player and
Relaxation music
Magazines
Pencil/paper (doodling)
Ice/heat pack
Preferred scents
Chocolate

Gum/chewy lollies
Lollipops, hard candies
Beanbag/stress ball
Inspirational book
Word games
Exercise bands
Nature items
Fidget toys
Spicy snacks

Koosh balls
Small blanket/stretch wrap
Crossword/Sudoku book
Poetry/favourite book
Beautiful images/pictures
Water bottle
Adult colouring book
Mini fan

Put your kit together and use!!!



Taken from: The Sensory Connection Self-regulation Workbook: Learning to use sensory activities to manage stress, anxiety and emotional crisis. By Karen Moore (2008)

Comfort Spaces

A comfort space is a place you can go to decrease stress and escape from sensory 'bombardment'. It is an area of retreat but not a 'sleep space'. It could be a small room or simply a designated corner or space in the house. Television and computers are not recommended. You will need a comfortable place to sit, adjustable lighting, and possibly a small table or shelf. Items that help you to feel calm should be readily available in this area.

The idea is to go to your comfort space to make a conscious effort to calm down and regain self-control if you are feeling anxious or overwhelmed. Lots of people use their comfort space to 'prepare' for things that they might find difficult, going out in the community, talking to certain people, completing activities, going to the doctor/school, WINZ etc... Quiet time in this space helps you to prepare for stressful events, or to recover from them. It is a space for relaxation, practicing deep breathing, and possibly meditation or mindfulness. You might decide to use the space at designated times during the day for stress management. Talk to the other people in your house so that they understand and respect this space and know why you are using it.

Ways to use a comfort space:

1. Following any major disruption or stressful event
2. Planned times in the morning, afternoon, evening
3. Before and after an expected stressful event, outing or appointment
4. After returning home from work/school etc
5. Time for deep breathing or meditation

Appropriate Spaces:

1. Small room
2. Cosy area of bedroom, kitchen or living room
3. Corner of a room near a window

Furniture:

1. Rocker, beanbag chair, soft, comfy chair
2. Small table, bookcase or shelf
3. Lamp or dimmer light
4. Screen or divider to make space more private

Idea for items for calming -think of things that work for you!

1. **Auditory input:** CD player/iPod, relaxation tapes, books on tape, music box, sound machine, chimes, indoor fountain, fan or other white noise
2. **Visual input:** landscape scenes, books with beautiful pictures, photographs, plants, flowers, sculpture, art
3. **Oral motor:** gum, hot lollies, beef jerky, strong mints, herbal tea, crunchy pretzels
4. **Smell:** scented hand cream, scented candle, smell box, scented soaps to smell, cedar pillow, pot pourri
5. **Touch:** blanket or throw, weighted blanket/lap pad, heavy weighted animal (or real!), weighted shoulder pad, koosh balls, stress balls, bean bags, fuzzy objects, fidgets, hand held fan or massager, items with different textures
6. **Vestibular:** rocking chair, Swiss ball to sit, bounce on, swing
7. **Quiet activities:** cards, knitting or other craft, books, poetry, art supplies, Sudoku, crosswords, word search, jigsaw puzzle, directions for deep breathing, cards or posters with positive affirmations.

Taken from: The Sensory Connection Self-regulation Workbook: Learning to use sensory activities to manage stress, anxiety and emotional crisis.
By Karen Moore (2008)

Sensory Menu for Coping and Calming

Review the following suggestions and note these that you think would be helpful to you in stressful situations. Plan specific ways to use them. Find ways to integrate calming sensory input into everyday routines.

- Routines
- Familiarity
- Low demands
- Rocking
- Massage
- Soft slow rhythmic music
- Soft slow rhythmic movement
- Rocking
- Swinging
- Tuck sheets tightly at bed time
- Blanket wraps
- Soft voices
- Apply gentle pressure to shoulders
- Weighted lap pad
- Weighted blanket
- Weighted animal
- Stroking an animal
- Watching an aquariums
- Background noise of bubbling water
- Lava lamp
- Sound of a fan
- Breeze of a fan
- Sound of ocean waves
- Hugs and self hugs
- Sleeping bag
- Firm pressure on shoulders
- Back rub
- Shower
- Warm bath
- Watching a flickering fire
- rhythmic bouncing of ball
- Colour or paint something easy
- Work with play or play dough
- Foot roller
- Quiet time
- Deep breathing
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Humming
- Singing
- Head rolls
- Walking slowly
- Imagining a favorite scene
- Ride in a car
- Sit in the sun
- Sit on hands or legs
- Relaxation tapes
- Chewing gum
- Squeezing stress ball
- Sucking lollipop or something sweet
- Slow stroking on back
- Hot drink
- Cold drink Dim light
- Dancing

Adapted from:
Sensory Menu for Coping and Calming
The Sensory Connection Program Handbook
Karen M. Moore. OTR/L

Section Two: Early Warning Signs

Today's date:.....

Early warning signs are things that you notice about yourself, or that others may notice about you. Early warning signs are sometimes subtle changes in your mind/body/actions/words that signal you may be starting to become emotionally charged and could use a healing intervention to bring you back to a calm and comfortable place within yourself.

My early warning signs are (please tick box):

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clenching teeth | <input type="checkbox"/> Breathing hard | <input type="checkbox"/> Shaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking loudly | <input type="checkbox"/> Swearing | <input type="checkbox"/> Removing clothes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wanting to hit things | <input type="checkbox"/> Eating more | <input type="checkbox"/> Wringing hands |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Negative thoughts | <input type="checkbox"/> Bouncing legs | <input type="checkbox"/> Shortness of breath |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Running | <input type="checkbox"/> Clenching fists | <input type="checkbox"/> Crying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being rude | <input type="checkbox"/> Giggling | <input type="checkbox"/> Rocking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pacing | <input type="checkbox"/> Heart pounding | <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot keep still |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talking fast | <input type="checkbox"/> Suddenly feeling too hot | <input type="checkbox"/> Difference in self-care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wanting to smoke more | | <input type="checkbox"/> Hiding away from others |

Other (please describe): _____

Section One: Triggers

Today's date:.....

A trigger is something that sets off an emotion such as fear, panic, anger, "fight or flight response", or causes traumatic memories to resurface.

Experiences/sensations that can distress me are (please tick box):

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> being in an unfamiliar routine/environment | <input type="checkbox"/> feeling alone | <input type="checkbox"/> being told/forced to take medication(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bedtime | <input type="checkbox"/> Being cut-off from my loved ones | <input type="checkbox"/> feeling frustrated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sudden movements around me | <input type="checkbox"/> being touched/hugged | <input type="checkbox"/> being spoken to impolitely |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sudden loud noise – e.g. slamming doors | <input type="checkbox"/> constant noise such as lots of talking/TV/music | <input type="checkbox"/> doors being shut on me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> people coming into my room unannounced | <input type="checkbox"/> people pacing around | <input type="checkbox"/> arguments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other people yelling/shouting/crying | <input type="checkbox"/> being teased or picked on | <input type="checkbox"/> not feeling listened to/ feeling ignored |
| <input type="checkbox"/> people coming too close to me | <input type="checkbox"/> mealtimes | <input type="checkbox"/> not getting to have a say in decisions about me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> feeling confused | <input type="checkbox"/> darkness/nighttime | <input type="checkbox"/> not knowing who I can ask for help |
| <input type="checkbox"/> being around women | <input type="checkbox"/> having the bedroom door open/closed | <input type="checkbox"/> feeling trapped, no choices |
| <input type="checkbox"/> being around men | <input type="checkbox"/> feeling physically unwell or in pain | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lack of privacy or space (sharing a room) | <input type="checkbox"/> feeling too hot/cold | <input type="checkbox"/> not being heard |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> feeling I'm being stared at | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> bad dreams | |

Other triggers for me (eg, a particular time of day/night/time in the year, contact with family): _____

Section Three: Strategies

Today's date:.....

Strategies may assist you in times when you have experienced a 'trigger' or when you have noticed your 'early warning signs'. Each person is different. Think of everyday things that you like. You may enjoy the sensation you feel when you are dancing, or listening to calming music from your headphones or staring at the clouds. You may like to be with company or alone.

Some of the things that I find calming are (please tick box):

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Time away from a stressful situation | <input type="checkbox"/> Using a wheat pack | <input type="checkbox"/> People of my culture to talk to |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talking to someone I trust | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking a cold/hot shower | <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking with someone from my faith |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lying down/resting | <input type="checkbox"/> Cold water over my hands | <input type="checkbox"/> Rocking chair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eating | <input type="checkbox"/> Holding onto an ice cube | <input type="checkbox"/> Snapping/ripping bubble paper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sitting in a massage chair | <input type="checkbox"/> Going to gym / exercising | <input type="checkbox"/> Art – drawing/painting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taking a hot shower | <input type="checkbox"/> Having a bath | <input type="checkbox"/> Foot bath |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Colouring in | <input type="checkbox"/> Playing a physical game | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting a hug |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to my favourite music | <input type="checkbox"/> Household chores | <input type="checkbox"/> Having a foot massage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing a journal | <input type="checkbox"/> Sitting on a bean bag | <input type="checkbox"/> Being pampered with make up |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Using a quiet room to relax | <input type="checkbox"/> Wrapping myself in a blanket | <input type="checkbox"/> Having my hair brushed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Men around me | <input type="checkbox"/> Hugging a pillow | <input type="checkbox"/> Time alone in a quiet space – e.g. quiet room/ outside on the grass |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Women around me | <input type="checkbox"/> Playing a game boy/ Using my I-POD | <input type="checkbox"/> Soft lighting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading a book/magazine | <input type="checkbox"/> Using a punch bag | <input type="checkbox"/> Time with family or friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to peaceful/loud music | <input type="checkbox"/> Sitting on a recliner chair | <input type="checkbox"/> Crying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bouncing a ball | <input type="checkbox"/> Walking/Pacing | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Squeezing stress balls/toys | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Playing cards/games with others | |

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Using a hot/cold face cloth | <input type="checkbox"/> Humour/having a laugh | <input type="checkbox"/> Punching a pillow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weighted blanket | <input type="checkbox"/> Watching a video/DVD | <input type="checkbox"/> Deep breathing exercises |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bean bag tapping | <input type="checkbox"/> Guided meditation | <input type="checkbox"/> Having my hands held |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aromatherapy | <input type="checkbox"/> Massage – head/shoulder | <input type="checkbox"/> Yoga stretches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer | | <input type="checkbox"/> Playing piano |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading the Bible | | <input type="checkbox"/> Realistic soft toy dog/cat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Animal contact | | |

Calling Friends/Family – Who? _____

Other (please describe): _____

If you or the people around you missed noticing your early warning signs and you find yourself in an extreme state of anger/frustration what would you think would be the preferred course of action?

***Please advise staff if there is anything that you would like to add to this form that may be helpful for your care**