

SENSORY CURRICULUM - Coping Strategies for Anxiety

Many children with autism and other additional sensory needs commonly experience daily anxiety. Sensory-based coping skills are an effective way to help children deal with feelings of anxiety. Sensory-based anxiety coping strategies can help children deal with stress and feelings of anxiety for long-term success and social-emotional development. They can benefit children with a multitude of difficulties.

Sensory Motor: Jump, push, pull, catch, roll, balance

- Jumping on different surfaces e.g., trampoline, low step (box jump)
- Pushing a medicine ball or weighted container along a track /lines/zig zag
- 7-minute Animal HIIT workout
- Run to collect balls and put them in a basket (this could be timed/take turns)
- Swing seat on a tree
- Crawling through a tunnel
- Rolling or bouncing on a gym ball
- Balloon tapping (keeping a balloon afloat)
- Walking along low benches

Create a sensory bin: To create a sensory bin, simply fill a small tub or container with objects from nature such as leaves, rocks, and sand that have different textures for children to explore. Or use foods, like pasta, rice, or beans, along with spoons, scoops, and small toys to bury and discover.

Plant a garden: This is a fun activity you can do together that involves an ongoing sensory benefit. You don't have to go big — you can even plant small seeds into the cups of an egg carton. Digging in the dirt, sorting seeds, watering, and smelling the flowers or herbs you, the plant will all stimulate the senses

Threading: Threading offers children the chance to run their fingers through a collection of funny-feeling beads as well as the opportunity to make choices about colours, textures, and patterns as they bead.

While older children will be able to bead with regular string and beads, younger children will be better able to engage with this activity using stiff pipe cleaners that won't allow the beads to slip off as they work.

Sand Ideas

Add a splash of water and wash up liquid for another sensory element.

Add food colouring and/or glitter.

Add PVA glue and a dash of paint, place on the card and then dry to create longer-term creation.

Add metal objects and use magnets to find the objects.

Put a shallow amount of sand on top of a bright picture or mirror. Children move the sand until they find the picture.

Little Scientist

Children love to mix things to make potions. Provide children with materials to create their laboratory.

E.g., clear plastic pots, plastic bottles, Spoons, lolly sticks, and clothes.

Possible Ingredients

Cooking oil

Water

Ketchup

Baking powder

Corn flour

Baby oil

Yoghurt

Sugar

You may want to stick to using edible substances, especially as children love to experiment by tasting!

Sensory Food Fun

Marshmallows:

Melt in microwave, very sticky. Add washing-up liquid to make it slimy and bubbly

Mashed Potato

Instant, allow children to mix with water, and add food colouring.

Watermelon Sculptures

Cut thin slices of watermelon. Invite your child to cut shapes from the slices using different-shaped cookie cutters. Offer lolly sticks, metal straws and cocktail sticks to create watermelon sculptures. Challenge your child to touch, lick or bite their watermelon structure without making it topple over!

Useful References and Links

- Autism Toolbox: <http://www.autismtoolbox.co.uk/>
- AET: <https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/>
- National Autistic Society: <https://www.autism.org.uk/>