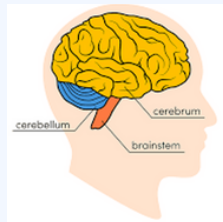


# REAL LIFE SENSORY STRATEGIES

*This handout accompanies the "Module Two: Real Life Sensory Strategies" video*

## SENSES HELP US FEEL SAFE



Information from our eight senses come into the brain through our Nervous System to the most basic parts of the brain, called the brainstem. The brainstem controls things like heart rate, how quickly you are breathing, body temperature, and other basic life skills. Inside the brainstem is a structure called the Thalamus, which acts like a switchboard as a “gatekeeper” for what information is important for the rest of the brain to know. The information that makes it through the brainstem, heads to the higher functioning parts of the brain, called the cerebrum. The cerebrum controls things like speech, creativity, attention, and other more difficult skills.



### TRY AT HOME ACTIVITY:

*Take some time alone and reflect on the following questions to explore your own sensory needs as a parent. These sensory needs may influence how you interact with your child's sensory needs.*



*For tips on how to respond to a child who may be displaying difficult behaviors, review the IDEAL Response strategy from the TBRI Institute using the QR code.*



## TANTRUM VS SENSORY MELTDOWN

### Tantrum

- Lasts a few minutes
- Makes demands
- Ends when they get what they want or need

### Sensory Meltdown

- Can last for 30+ min
- Can be aggressive or self-injurious
- Seems out of control



Children with sensory processing difficulties may display difficult behaviors, especially when they are going through periods of change. Tantrums can be age appropriate and emotional outbursts can also be how children cope with difficult situations. Many times it can be difficult to decide if a child's behavior is due to a sensory need or a behavioral need. This infographic gives you some clues to figure it out. Visit <https://www.theottoolbox.com/sensory-meltdown-or-tantrum/> for more information.

# TRYING A VISUAL SCHEDULE

Here are some things to keep in mind when trying to use a visual schedule:

- Keep it simple at first- match images to your child's vocabulary and start with 2-3 pictures.
- Use general pictures to increase flexibility (ex. "Playtime" versus "Outside"/ "Board Games")
- Use them consistently! Place them in various rooms around the house or other settings and use them throughout the day to help your child learn to rely on them.
- Involve your child in creating their schedule- they can choose pictures or help find them in a magazine, they can decorate their schedules with stickers or a favorite theme, and they can make choices between activities to include or the order they go in.
- Use real pictures from your home and family- Apps like **MyRoutine** or **Social Stories Creator & Library** are free and allow you to upload your own photos.



## TRY AT HOME ACTIVITY:

*Now that you have a better understanding of how your child may be interpreting their environment work with your child to create a "Time-in" space at home. This can be any kind of designated calming space with their preferred strategies in it. The goal as caregivers is to recognize when they are starting to have difficulty with self-regulation and suggest a "time-in" before behaviors arrive or escalate. Using sensory strategies regularly and preventatively is far more effective than negative consequences for behaviors. Eventually, your child may start requesting this space on their own. This strategy also translates well for older children and young adults who may need to learn to ask to "walk away" versus staying in a situation that may escalate.*



## HEAVY WORK FOR SLEEP

Bedtime can be a very difficult time of day for all children, especially those experiencing a transition. Many children need to be taught healthy "wind down routines" and this is especially true for children with sensory processing difficulties. Setting up healthy routines early is important, but it's never too late to start!

As discussed in the powerpoint, "heavy work" can be an excellent tool to use throughout the day for calming. This is true, even for bedtime! This QR code takes you to a video of an OT describing how to use heavy work as part of a bedtime routine.



