



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER August 2024

Sensory Processing, Emotional Regulation, and Executive Functioning



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Hello, AARC Newsletter Subscribers!

Welcome back! As we enter August, the summer months are behind us, and we can begin to plan and organize with more focus. This quarter's newsletter has information and resources to support sensory processing, emotional regulation, and key aspects of executive functioning, including planning and organizing!

Autumn Holt
Autism Resource Specialist

Sensory Sensations

Featuring Sensory Support: To-Go!

Whether you are at work or school, sensory processing needs exist and vary by person. Therefore, it is a good idea to plan and prepare for individual sensory processing needs. This quarter, we offer a plan to prepare wherever you are at. Creating a sensory support to-go bag is an easy, practical strategy to support sensory processing needs!



Start here:

- Identify which of the eight sensory processing systems (SPS) you need to support when outside of your home.
- Determine what tool would best support that system.
- Select a container or small bag to pack.
- Pack the bag with your sensory tools and supplies that can be used anywhere at any time.

Sensory Tools and Support Examples

*The AARC does not recommend the use of any of these items but rather provides a list of examples. An Occupational Therapist is a great resource for accessing specific information to support sensory processing needs. Additionally, there are many more options, and if you are interested in learning more, please contact the AARC!

Gustatory: chewable necklace, gum, chew item.

Auditory: noise-reducing earbuds, noise-canceling headphones, playlist, sound machine.

Olfactory: essential oils or sprays, scented fidgets, scented lotions, nose clips, face mask.

Visual: sunglasses, eye mask, glittery/colorful, visually pleasing fidget.

Interceptive: visual emotional support or scale, temperature tools (heating pad, fan).

Tactile: squishy ball, vibrating toy, textured items, kinetic sand

Vestibular: visual list of activities (spinning, yoga, stretching), bouncy ball.

Proprioceptive: sensory ball, weighted blanket, bubbles

Sensory Processing Systems

Sensory Processing is how a person receives and processes sensory information from the world around them. The bubble snake supports the visual, olfactory, proprioceptive, and tactile systems.

The Proprioceptive System (movement) is related to body awareness and pressure/force. Additionally, proprioceptive input can support learning to control response to sensory stimuli.

For example, when a person feels overwhelmed by sensory input in their environment, proprioceptive input can have a calming effect.

The Tactile System (touch) is how our skin experiences and senses things such as temperature, touch, and pressure.

The Visual System (sight) is how our eyes process and receive visual information such as color, 3-D, location, and depth.

The Interoceptive System (internal awareness) is how

The Vestibular System (balance) is centered in the inner ear and has to do with balance and movement.

The Auditory System (hear) is how auditory (sound) is received and processed with our ears.

The Olfactory System (smell) is information received from smells or odors using the nose.

The Oral System (taste) information received from the mouth and jaw, including texture and temperature.

Hypersensitivity or Over-responsivity is when a person has an increased response to sensory information or is more reactive than most.

Hypersensitivity or Under-responsivity is when a person's response to sensory information is less reactive than most.

Want to learn more?

Check out the AARC FREE e-module! [Click here](#) to access the introduction to the sensory processing module.

The information on sensory processing systems can be found in Hartman et al., 2023—*The Adult Assessment Handbook: A Neurodiversity-affirmative Approach*.

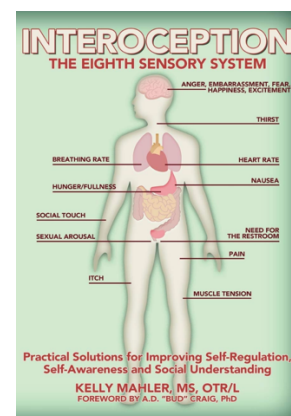
Recommended Resource!

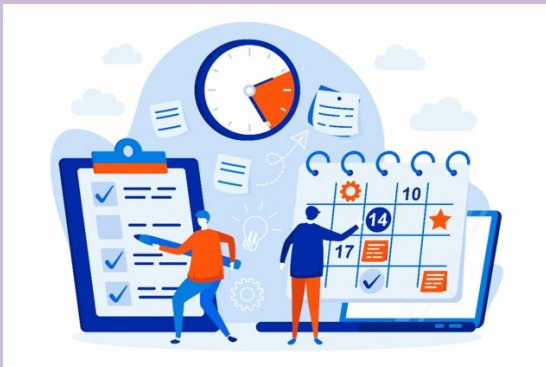
Interoception: The Eighth Sensory System

By Kelly Mahler

This book offers information about understanding and supporting interoception in individuals with autism spectrum. It includes practical strategies for all ages.

Available for loan through the [Anne Freitag Library at SESA!](#)





Executive Functioning

Planning, organizing, and processing

Back to school and work means more planning and organizing to keep life on track! We have included some information to help support you or someone you know with autism.

Executive Functioning

Cognitive processes are necessary for executing planning, organizing, and completing

tasks, including attention.

Working memory is the brain's temporary storage. You can think of it like a Post-it note, the kind with the sticky adhesive at the top used for short-term notes. Working memory lasts about 10-15 seconds.

Planning and Organizing include the ability to process information and manage time.

Cognitive flexibility is the ability to shift attention between tasks and activities, including shifting internal attention between concepts.

Strategies

There are various strategies for supporting executive function skills, including visual supports and a step-by-step approach. However, a functional strategy that supports various needs utilizing various approaches and strategies is the use of apps. Apps are available on phones, tablets, and even laptops. Utilizing apps is a great strategy to support executive functioning needs and differences for all ages. Apps offer various supports, including visual reminders, alarms, note-taking, and scheduling options. I've listed a few FREE options below.

Apps to Support Focus!

Utilize apps for visual reminders, alarms, note-taking, and scheduling.

Focus Keeper is a visual timer to help maintain focus and complete 25-minute tasks with 5-minute breaks in between. [Click here to learn more.](#)

PomoToDo offers a 25-minute timer with 5-minute breaks between activities and also has an integrated to-do list. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Rescue Time Lite helps with distractibility. The app allows you to set limits on websites or block them during certain times of the day. If you attempt to access them during your set time, a reminder pops up to tell you to keep working. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Apps for Planning and Organizing

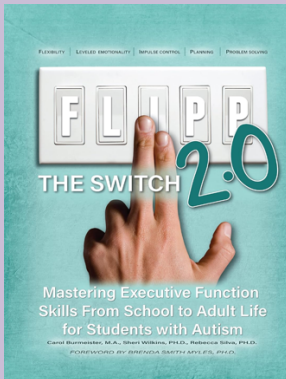
Google Calendar can track daily activities and provide reminders. You can also set up multiple reminders over weeks, days, or minutes. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Todolist allows you to add tasks and set due dates, share projects, and even add additional tasks within one large task or activity, similar to breaking it down into steps for the task. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Remember the Milk is a to-do list that allows the user to add tasks and create lists for different categories, including home, school, work, and even personal. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Trello is a visual and interactive app for managing tasks. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Evernote is a note-taking app that offers options to scan and tag handwritten notes or drawings. [Click here to learn more.](#)



Recommended Resource!

FLIPP The Switch 2.0: Mastering executive function skills from school to adult life for students with autism.

By Carol Burmeister, Sheri Wilkins, & Rebecca Silva.

This book offers classroom strategies for autistic students that promote and teach skills, including self-advocacy and executive function.

Available for loan through the [Anne Freitag Library at SESA!](#)

Emotional Regulation

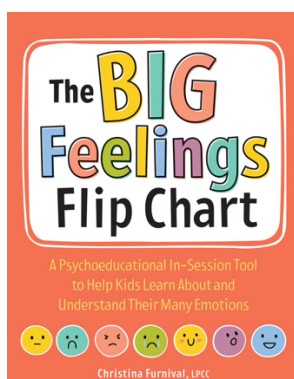
Emotional regulation, in the simplest terms, is how a person perceives, manages, and responds to emotional experiences. If you or someone you know has experienced dysregulation, you can understand it has complex meaning. Dysregulation is not being able to manage overwhelming feelings. This can look like a meltdown; however, it is different for each person.

Strategies to support emotional regulation include teaching skills to support a person's ability to identify and recognize feelings and emotional changes by bringing awareness to patterns of behavior and physiological changes such as increased heart rate or fatigue. Additionally, an important part of the process is to encourage and teach the use of strategies to promote feelings of calm, such as engaging in soothing activities.

Resources

Social Thinking! Offers free resources for any age group from early childhood to mature adulthood. Resources include worksheets, videos, webinars, and more! [Click here to learn more.](#)

Autism Level UP! Offers free tools to support regulation. [Click here to learn more.](#)



Resource for Parents!

The Big Feelings Flip Chart
By Christina Furnival

This is an interactive book for kids to make connections with their emotions. It offers pictures, word meanings, coping strategies, and a place for kids to draw and/or write what they are feeling or understand the feelings.

Available for loan through the [Anne Freitag Library at SESA!](#)



[Free Resources!](#)



Alaskans, Where are you?

What topics would you be interested in learning more about? Please take a short survey for your chance to WIN!

Scan the QR code to complete the Survey!

[Click here to complete the survey!](#)

Disclaimer

The Alaska Autism Resource Center (AARC) recognizes that there are conversations and passions between the use of person-first language (i.e., "person with autism") and identity-first language (i.e., "autistic person") in relation to autism. In order to respect the diversity of voices within the Alaskan community, the AARC will use both terms interchangeably but will endeavor to use the preferred language in direct communications upon request.

Donate to the AARC!

AARC is a project of the Special Education Service Agency, and all AARC donations go through SESA. If you have questions about this, please feel free to [contact us](#).