

## Transcript



Welcome back to in our miniseries looking at meeting your child's sensory needs. In this short video we will look at strategies that may be useful when going out and about in the community.

### **Tune in to your child's difficulties.**

For a child with sensory integration difficulties, they may dread things other children enjoy such as family days out or even a trip to the supermarket. A child may struggle with the noise in an environment or the smell in a restaurant. But a little bit of planning can help children with sensory processing difficulties get the most out of these experiences. The best way to avoid a meltdown is to tune in to what your child's behaviour is telling you.

Please remember that your child should be supervised at all times when taking part in the activities suggested in this video.

### **Planning is key.**

With children with sensory processing difficulties a little bit of extra planning can make all the difference. Think about where you are going. Has the child been before? How did they react the last time they were there? Understanding your child's sensory difficulties will help you when you are planning.

Are they sensitive to certain noises? If so, what noises might they experience when you are there? What will your child have to wear? Will it be cold and they don't like wearing a coat? Could you have an alternative ready for example a cozy hoody?

## **Use A Secret (Lucy Jane Miller 2006)**

We introduced “a secret” by Lucy Jane Miller in our video “meeting your child's needs”. This is a problem-solving tool for parents, teenagers and even for children themselves to think about the seven elements in sensory and

motor challenges and to come up with some ideas of things to change to lead to smoother functioning for the child. A SECRET” is an acronym for these seven elements: attention, sensation, emotional regulation, culture, relationship, environment and task. A SECRET is not a rigid formula for what to do, but a flexible format helping you to consider each of these important elements in turn.

The sensation element is only one part of “a secret”. Think about how each of these elements could be influencing the behaviour and how or if these could be manipulated to allow your child to function smoothly.

### **Be Realistic**

Setting unrealistic expectations can be one of the most common mistakes parents make. It is really important to grade your activity and build up to bigger trips/days out. If your child struggles in a busy environment then expect that the first couple of times you go there, they may only last 5-10 minutes so set goals and praise when your child manages. For example, if your child struggles with loud noise and bright lights then expecting them to sit through a loud, bright film for 2 hours is probably an unrealistic expectation.

### **Use Familiar Strategies**

You should work towards a toolkit of sensory strategies that you know work with your child (having fidget toys/chewing aids/giving a tight cuddle/wearing a skin undergarment etc etc) take familiar strategies with you and make sure the child is aware they are there if they need them. When a child is feeling dysregulated this may not be the right time to introduce a new strategy. New strategies should be introduced at a time when the child feels calm and safe.

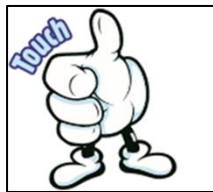


### **Helpful strategies – Hearing**

Some tools that may be helpful for auditory sensitivities can include ear defenders or air pods. A child can have no sound playing through the headphones/pods or can chose a sound that they find calming and is familiar to them.



Sometimes when a child is in control of the sound, they hear this can give them a greater sense of predictability and control and reduce anxiety.



### Helpful strategies – Touch

Using a fidget tool to help keep hands busy can be a good example of a calming tool and can help to distract the child.



Have a few fidgets/handheld sensory toys available. These can be easily purchased from toy stands or websites such as Amazon.



### Helpful strategies – Oral

Some children find chewing or sucking calming. This is a form of deep pressure for the mouth and jaw. Using a sports cap water bottle, chewing aid, boiled sweet or chewing gum (if age appropriate) can be useful tools.





## Helpful strategies – Proprioception/Deep pressure

Deep pressure can be calming to the central nervous system. Using deep pressure garments such as a baselayer sports top or just a gentle squeeze on the child's shoulders can help them to feel calm. A backpack with a heavy water bottle or book in it can also provide deep pressure through the shoulders.



## Helpful strategies – Smell

Smell is one of our most emotive senses. Using a smell that the child finds calming can be a helpful tool.

You could pop some oils on a handkerchief or give the child a small item of clothing with a familiar smell on it. If the child is likely to encounter unpleasant smells such as cooking smells that they find difficult to tolerate then using a handkerchief or face mask may be helpful



## Helpful strategies – Vision

Using sunglasses can be helpful to avoid bright sunlight or other lights. A cap can also help shield from too much visual stimulus.



## **Coming back home**

It's important to think about what's going to happen when you get home. Your child may have had to work really hard to manage the outing. This is not to say that the child has not enjoyed themselves but that they have had to work harder than others to maintain regulation. Allow some time when you get home for your child to unwind and have some time to themselves.

Give them familiar and safe tools that you have used before such as weighted items/headphones or some time on their tablet, and reward what they have achieved not focusing on what they found challenging.

## **Remember!**

Everyone has different sensory responses to stimuli. By thinking of your child's sensory systems and observing how they react to small changes, you can gain a better understanding why your child may be feeling, thinking or behaving differently to sensory feedback.

There will likely be times when your strategy doesn't work so have a toolbox full of strategies to dip into as needed.

Give time for strategies to work. Through consistently implementing the strategies they respond well to; you will help them to find a more positive sensory experience and meet their sensory needs.

Thank you for watching. We have hopefully suggested some strategies throughout this video you may wish to try. We have a pyramid problem solving tool on our website that you can download which may be useful for you. This problem-solving tool helps us to think about the behaviour and the possible underlying sensory causes. By putting the problem at the very top of the triangle then starting to think about each of the sensory systems below, you may be able to identify if there is a sensory reason for the problem. At the bottom of the pyramid, you list the strategies you wish to try.

In this example, using the problem of tantrums when we go to the supermarket, we have given examples of the sensory systems that might be receiving too much feedback. From this, add the strategies to try such as wearing a compression top during the trip.

If you have tried our suggestions for a while and feel you want to talk through strategies or need support to help implement these, please contact us.



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Advice and support can be sought from the service by contacting the team directly using our Enquiry Line or via our Enquiry Email Inbox.



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We will aim to contact you within 5 working days to discuss your enquiry