

Helping children to be ready to learn

- Children's Community
Occupational Therapy Service

Things young people have said to us

It's scary when there are so many people around – I just hate it.

My school shoes hurt. Mum has bought me loads of different ones... but they really bother me...

It is so loud in the classroom, I misbehave so that I can sit in the corridor – it's so much quieter there!

I can't seem to see the whiteboard as there's so much 'stuff' on the walls

I get really upset when the seating plan is changed and nobody has told me.

I just find it so difficult to wait as I have so many ideas!

The dining hall is sooooo loud – I don't eat anything at school

I just can't think of things as quickly as others ... so miss my turn..

There are so many instructions at one time... I just wait to see what everyone else is doing as I forget what 'Miss' has said.

Learning Aims for the session

At the end of this session, you will have tools to help with:

- Having a whole school/whole classroom approach to reduce time out of the classroom for some.
- Less disruption in the classroom and playground.
- Children settling quicker and ready to learn.
- Children having greater focus.
- How to support a child to maintain regulation.
- How to have the optimum learning environment.
- Understanding why you may be making these changes.

Tiered model of approach



Universal: Good for all

- Strategies/advice on our website

Targeted: Necessary for some

- Advice Line
- Resource Pack/training videos on our website

Specialist: Essential for a few

- Individual Assessment

Resources already available

www.cambspborochildrenshealth.nhs.uk/OT

Explore Children's Health for:

- Universal strategies
- Advice line - 0300 029 5050
- Ready to learn pack
- Targeted support – sensory differences, motor co-ordination
- Sensory differences overview
- Self-led training
- Ready to learn circuits - www.cambspborochildrenshealth.nhs.uk/ready-to-learn-circuits

Additional signposting

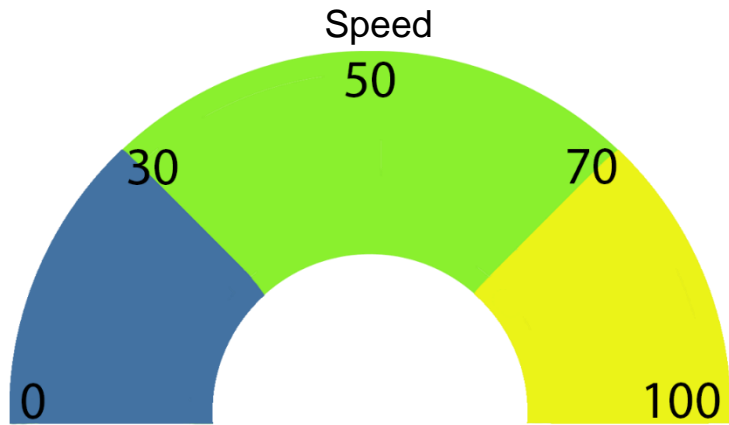
- Zones of Regulation - zonesofregulation.com/index.html

Being a teacher – the realities...

So what do you need?

- Lets consider a snapshot of one hour of your school day.
- Lets make a 'pizza'!
- Take a moment to consider where your 'threshold' is...

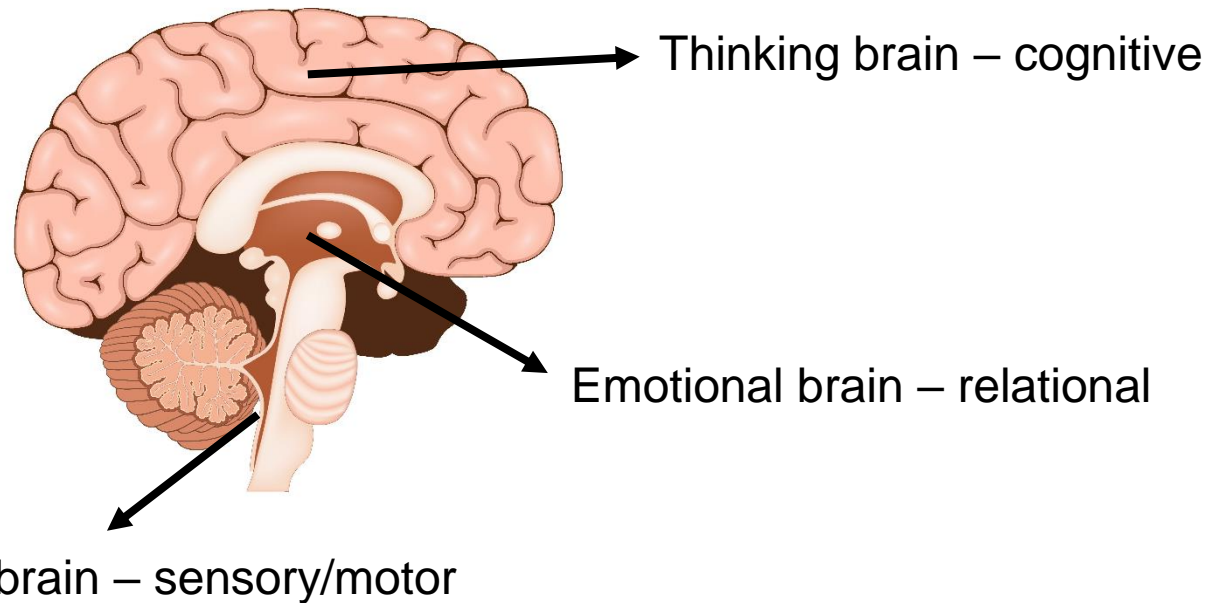
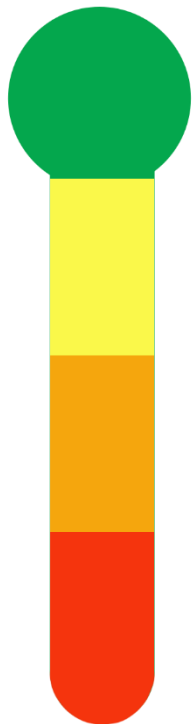
Calm alert levels



The Incredible 5-Point Scale

Assisting students in understanding social interactions and controlling their emotional responses.

The Brain

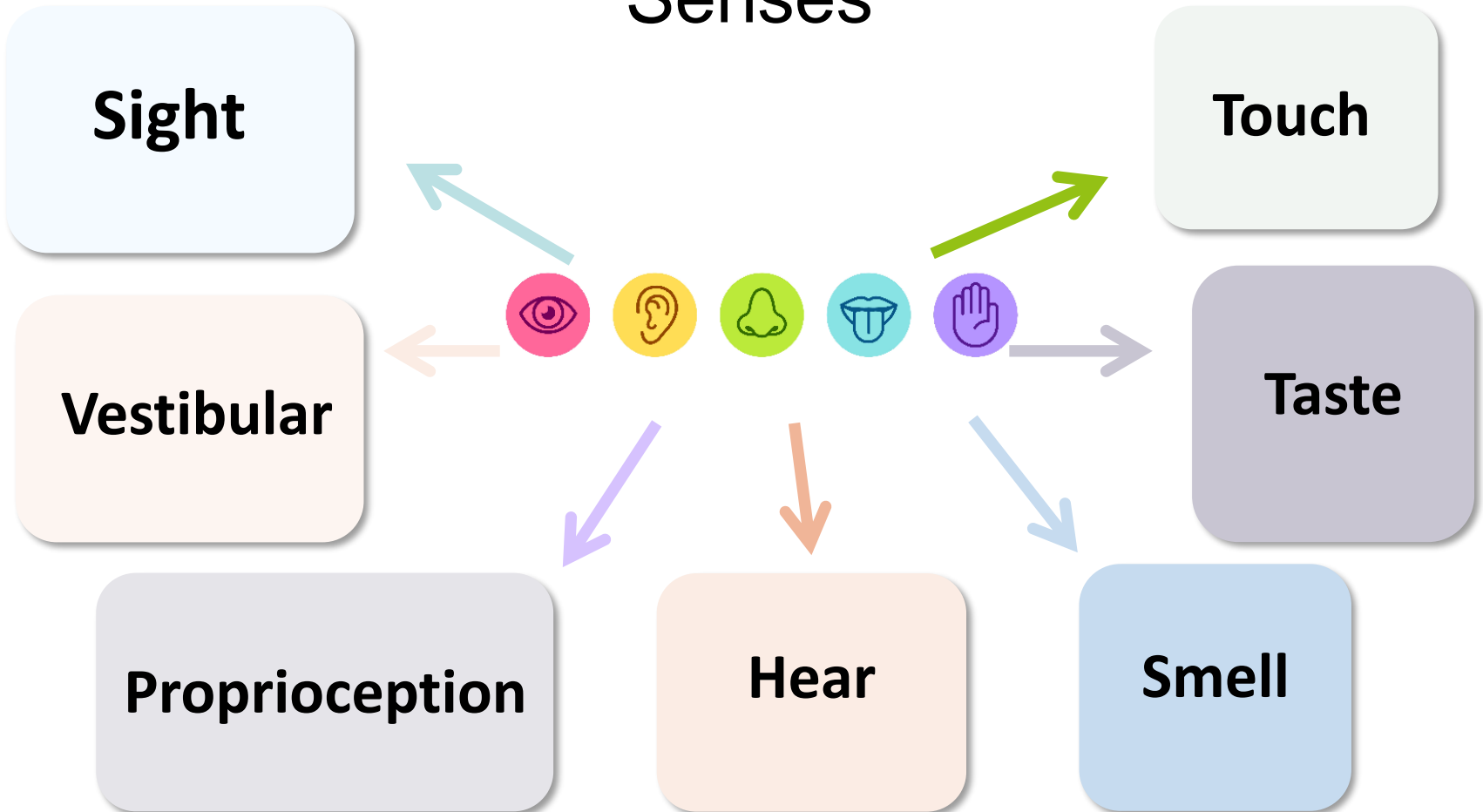


Strategies

Research has shown that regular movement has a positive impact on learning.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBSVZdTQmDs

Senses



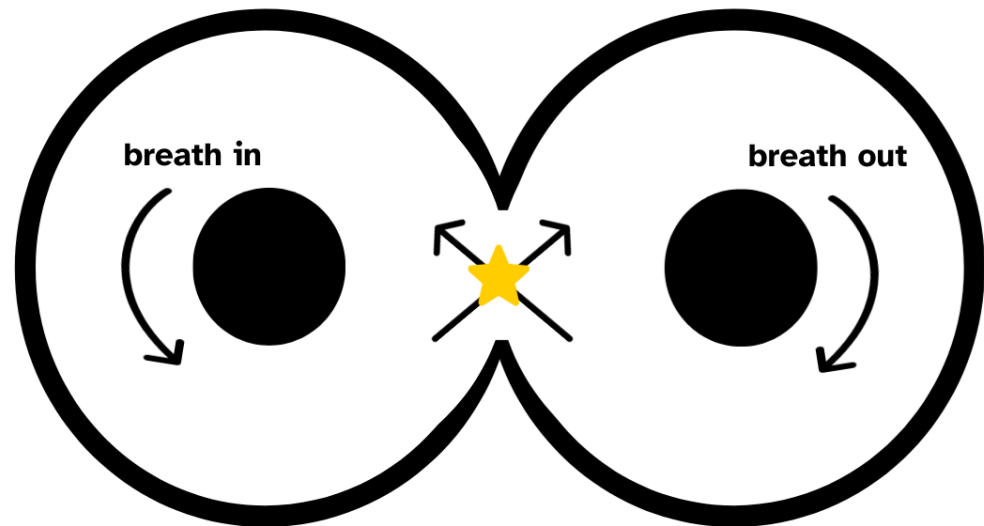
Strategies

- Breathing techniques (see pages 12 and 13)
- Exercises for the classroom to support regulation (see pages 14 to 17)
- How do your children communicate that they are:
 - a) okay
 - b) not sure at the moment
 - c) really not okay
 - Consider a coloured card – turned over on the desk to the chosen colour or coloured lollypop sticks

The Zones of Regulation

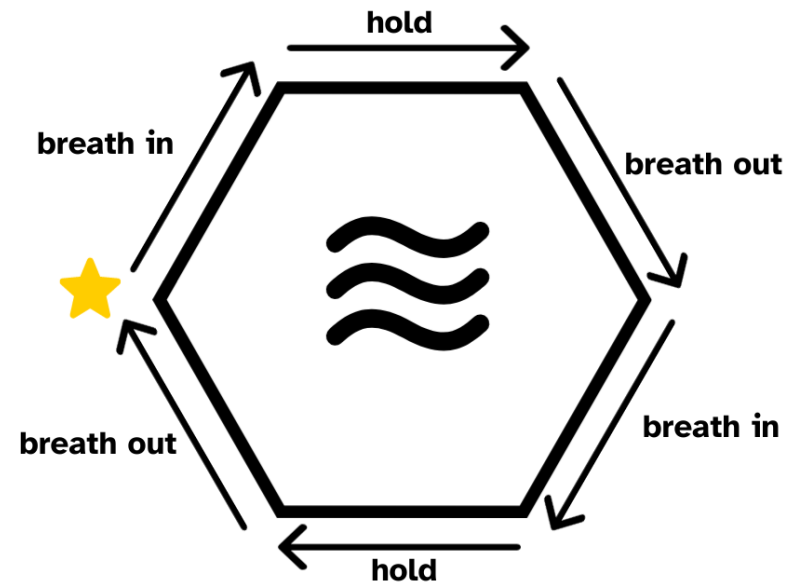
- Trace the Lazy 8 with your finger starting at the star and taking a deep breath.
- As you cross over to the other side of the Lazy 8, slowly let your breath out.
- Continue breathing around the Lazy 8 until you have a calm body and mind.

Lazy 8 Breathing



- Starting at the yellow star trace with your finger the sides of the hexagon as you take a deep breath in, feeling your shoulders rise as the air fills you.
- Trace over the next side as you hold your breath for a moment.
- Slowly breathe out as you trace the third side of the hexagon.
- Continue tracing around the bottom three sides of the hexagon as you complete another deep breath.
- Continue The Six Sides of Breathing cycle until you feel calm and relaxed.

The Six Sides of Breathing



Exercise idea suggestions to use in the classroom:

- Wall pushes – straighten your arms and place your open hands on the wall. Try pushing the wall over. Alternatively, try taking your nose to the wall and then pushing back again.
- Have the children clasp their hands and apply pressure downwards on the head - pretending they are a flower pushing up through the ground.
- Chair push-ups - Ask the children to place their hands either side of their chair seat. Ask them to push down through their hands as if trying to raise their bottom off the chair. Try to hold the position for a count of 5 and then repeat until they cannot do any more! Do another set once they have a quick break.

Exercise idea suggestions to use in the classroom:

- Push palms together.
- Pull hands apart.
- Give yourself a tight hug.
- Do arm circles in the air (whole arm movements, nice and slowly).
- Provide opportunities to practise drawing at a vertical surface e.g. paper on the wall, easel, white board. This will also help in the development of shoulder stability/control and promote a good wrist posture and pencil grasp.

Hand Exercise ideas as whole group/small group/individual boost:

- Encourage the children to hold their hands vertically; tap pointer fingers against the thumb five times, tap middle fingers against the thumb five times, tap ring fingers against the thumb five times, and tap little fingers against the thumb five times.
- Encourage children to close their hands into a tight fist, and then open the hand very wide. Repeat five times.

Hand Exercise ideas as whole group/small group/individual boost:

- Scrunch a sheet of A5/A4 paper into a ball with one hand so that you cannot see any more of the paper. Then open it out with the same hand, encourage the children to lay the paper on the table and flatten it out, pressing it open with the palm of their hand. Repeat with the other hand.
- Fold an A4 piece of paper in half (make sure it is in portrait). Press down on the fold to make a good crease. Keep folding in half in portrait and see if you can fold it seven times.

The Environment:

What might we need to adapt/modify

- Where are the spaces where you need your children to focus?
- Could your classroom be re-configured?
- Who sits by the window vs not by the window?
- Who sits at the front/who sits at the back?
- Who sits near the door?
- Where are your displays?
- Where is your visual timetable?

www.ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/NCSE-Sensory-Spaces-in-Schools-2021.pdf

The Environment: NICE guidelines

“Minimise any negative impact by:

- providing visual supports, for example, words, pictures or symbols that are meaningful for the child or young person
- making reasonable adjustments or adaptations to the amount of personal space given
- considering individual sensory sensitivities to lighting, noise levels and the colour of walls and furnishings.”

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg170/chapter/Recommendations

How can we adapt/modify the environment?

- Structured defined areas of where things are – consider arrangement of other furniture being 'vertical' rather than horizontal.
- Consider re-arrangement of desks/seating
- De-clutter
- Consider where your information is displayed
- Correct positioning for your left-handers
- Check positioning for children with visual differences
- Children who have adapted seating
- Storage Areas

Further strategies for the environment

- Quiet Space – create a comfortable, contained space within the classroom
- Use of headphones with calming music or noise reducing headphones
- Allocate a bench within an outside space
 - it could be named the 'friendship bench'
 - or a bench for 'quite time'

How to adapt the task?

- Expectations for the individual to be made clear
- Usual differentiation according to ability
- Clear instructions – not multiple
- Consider approach to learning – visual, auditory, touch (kinesthetic)
- Movement breaks
- Sitting positions – carpet time isn't easy for everyone?

Before we finish, try this ...

- Close your eyes
- Take 3 slow, deep breaths and visualise a positive space
- Wait...