

SENSORY OVERLOAD TOOLKIT

for Kids

A Kid-Friendly Guide to
Understanding Senses, Calm- Down
Tools, and Self-Regulation





COPING WITH SENSORY OVERLOAD

Understanding Your Senses & What Helps You Feel Calm

We all use our five senses — **seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching** — to understand the world around us. But sometimes, the world can feel too loud, too bright, too busy, or too much all at once. When this happens, your body might feel confused, overwhelmed, or upset. This is called **sensory overload**.

There is nothing wrong with you when this happens — it just means your brain is getting more information than it can sort through at one time. Everyone's brain works differently, and some kids have senses that are extra strong or extra sensitive.



What Sensory Overload Can Feel Like When your senses get overwhelmed, you might notice:

- Covering your ears because sounds feel too loud
- Squinting or looking away from bright lights
- Feeling “itchy,” bothered, or distracted by clothing or textures
- Wanting to get away from busy crowds
- Feeling upset, tired, or needing a break
- Wanting to hide under a blanket or go somewhere quiet

These feelings don't mean you're doing anything wrong — they're your body's way of saying, “I need something different right now.”



COPING WITH SENSORY OVERLOAD



Why Understanding Your Senses Matters

Learning about your senses helps you:

- Understand what makes you comfortable
- Notice early signs of overload
- Ask for what you need
- Choose calming tools that help your brain feel safe and steady
- Feel more confident in new or noisy places

When you know your senses well, you can take better care of yourself — just like a superhero learning how their powers work! 🐝 ✨



What This Toolkit Will Help You Do

In the pages ahead, you will:

- Explore how each of your senses works
- Discover what sounds, lights, textures, and spaces feel good (and not so good)
- Learn what helps your body feel calm
- Build your own set of sensory strategies you can use anytime you feel overwhelmed
- Practice asking for the tools or support you need

Every page is here to help you understand you — your body, your brain, and what helps you feel safe, happy, and peaceful.

SENSORY TRIGGERS & INSTANT REGULATION CHEAT SHEETS

Let's Learn How My Body Understands the World!

Your body uses five senses to help you learn, play, and stay safe. Let's explore what each sense feels like for you!

1. Seeing (Sight)

Things that look calm or comfortable to me:

Things that look too bright, busy, or stressful:

What helps my eyes feel better:

2. Hearing (Sound) Sounds I like or that feel gentle:

Sounds that feel too loud or overwhelming:

What helps my ears feel better:

SENSORY TRIGGERS & INSTANT REGULATION CHEAT SHEETS

3. Touching (Texture&Feel)

Textures I enjoy (soft, smooth, squishy, etc.):

Textures that bother me (scratchy, sticky, rough):

What helps my body feel comfortable:

4. Smelling (Scents) Smells I like (flowers, soap, baking, etc.):

Smells I don't like or that feel too strong:

What helps me feel okay around smells:

SENSORY TRIGGERS & INSTANT REGULATION CHEAT SHEETS

5. Tasting(Food&Flavors)

Tastes I enjoy:

Tastes or food textures I don't like:

Foods that feel safe and comforting for me:

My Senses Summary One thing that helps me feel calm is:

One thing I want grown-ups to know about my senses is:

WHAT HELPS ME FEEL CALM

Let's Learn What Helps My Body Feel Safe and Peaceful

Everyone has things that help them relax when the world feels too loud, too bright, or too busy.

When I Start to Feel Overwhelmed...

Sometimes my body gives me clues, like:

- My heart beats fast
- My tummy feels tight
- My hands squeeze or flap
- I want to hide or cover my ears
- I feel like crying or yelling

When I notice these clues, I can try one of my calming tools.

Calming Tools That Help My Body Slow Down

Here are some things that help me feel better:

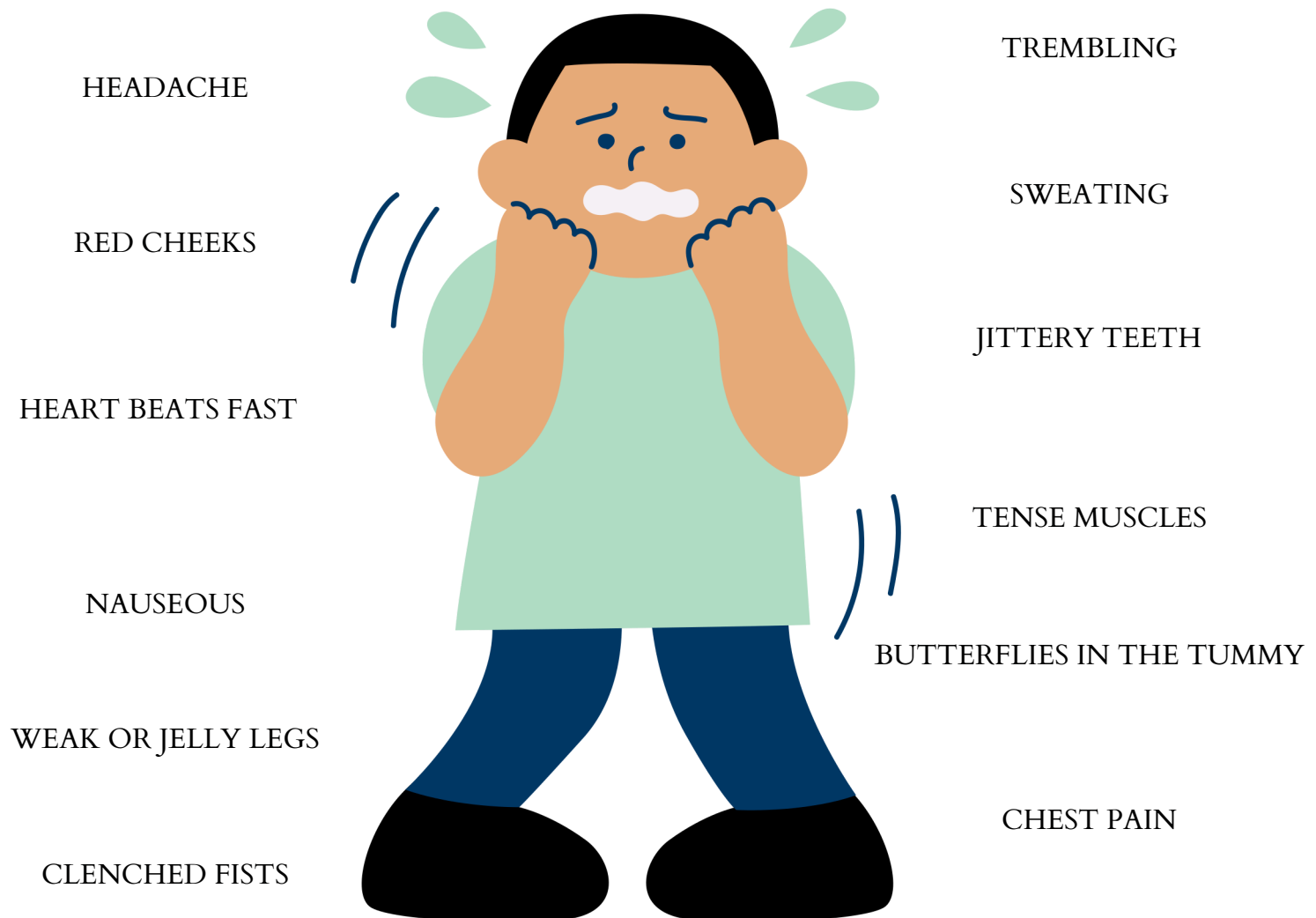
Things that help me relax my body (breathing, stretching, movement):

Things that help me feel safe (snuggly blanket, quiet corner, favorite toy):

Things that help me focus or stay busy (fidgets, coloring, puzzles):

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF FEELING OVERWHELMED

Sometimes when my senses feel overwhelmed, my body might react in different ways. I might feel tired, tense, shaky, or like I need to cover my ears or eyes. These are just signals that my body needs something different to feel safe and calm again. Everyone's senses work in their own special way, and learning what my body needs helps me take care of myself.



WHAT HELPS ME FEEL CALM

Sometimes the world can feel **too loud, too bright, too fast, or too busy**. When our senses get overwhelmed, our bodies might react in ways that surprise us — we might feel jumpy, tired, upset, shaky, or like we want to run away or hide. When this happens, it can be hard to think clearly or know what to do to feel better.

That's why calming strategies are so important. **Calming strategies** are tools that help your body and brain feel safe, steady, and more in control. They give you a way to slow down, take a break, and reset when your senses are working extra hard. You can use these strategies anytime you feel overwhelmed by noise, light, textures, or too much activity. They can help your body relax, your mind feel clearer, and your feelings become easier to understand.

Everyone's senses are different, and so are the strategies that help. What works for one person might not work for another — and that's okay. Part of learning about sensory overload is discovering what **helps your body feel calm, comfortable, and supported**.

In the next pages, you'll explore different calming tools. As you try them, pay attention to which ones help you the most — you might even come up with your own!

WHAT HELPS ME FEEL CALM

STRATEGIES I CAN USE TO MAKE MYSELF FEEL BETTER

The next time you are feeling overwhelmed about something, try some of these activities to see if they can help to take your mind of your worries.

HOLD A
FIDGET TOY



SIT IN A
QUIET PLACE



YOGA



TALK TO
SOMEONE



SPEND TIME
IN NATURE



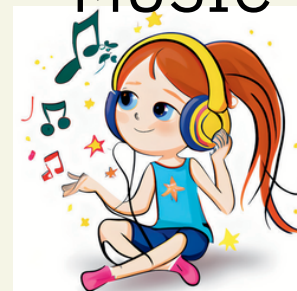
WRITE OR DRAW



HUG A
TEDDY



LISTEN TO
MUSIC



WHAT HELPS ME FEEL CALM

Calming Tools for My Senses

For my ears (quiet space, headphones, soft music):

For my eyes (dim lights, sunglasses, looking away for a moment):

For my sense of touch (soft textures, deep pressure, pillows):

Helpful Words I Can Use

Sometimes I can tell a grown-up how I feel. I can say:

- “I need a break.”
- “It’s too loud.”
- “That hurts my ears/eyes/body.”
- “Can I go somewhere quiet?”
- “I need help, please.”

A sentence I can practice saying:

My Calm Plan

When I feel overwhelmed, one thing that usually helps is:

Grown-ups can help me by:

NOISE, LIGHT & TEXTURE PREFERENCE CHECKLISTS

Let's Learn What Feels Good (and Not So Good) to My Senses!

Use these checklists to help you understand what your body likes, dislikes, or needs to feel comfortable.

Noise / Sound Checklist

Sounds I Like:

- ☐ Softmusic
- ☐ Nature sounds (rain, birds, ocean)
- ☐ Whispering voices
- ☐ White noise or fans
- ☐ People talking quietly
- ☐ Other: _____

Sounds That Bother Me:

- ☐ Loud voices
- ☐ Crowds
- ☐ Sirens or alarms
- ☐ Vacuum cleaners
- ☐ Barking dogs
- ☐ School bells
- ☐ Other: _____

Sounds That Help Me Feel Calm:

- ☐ Calmingmusic
- ☐ Noise-canceling headphones
- ☐ Quiet room
- ☐ Humming or singing
- ☐ White noise
- ☐ Other: _____

NOISE, LIGHT & TEXTURE PREFERENCE CHECKLISTS

Light / Visual Checklist

Lights I Like:

- ☐ Soft lamps
- ☐ Natural sunlight
- ☐ Fairy lights
- ☐ Dim classroom lights
- ☐ Night-lights
- ☐ Other: _____

Lights That Bother Me:

- ☐ Fluorescentlights
- ☐ Flashing lights
- ☐ Bright sunshine
- ☐ Screen brightness
- ☐ Busy or colorful rooms
- ☐ Other: _____

What Helps My Eyes:

- ☐ Sunglasses
- ☐ Hat or hoodie
- ☐ Dim lighting
- ☐ Looking away for a break
- ☐ Sitting in a calmer, quieter area
- ☐ Other: _____

NOISE, LIGHT & TEXTURE PREFERENCE CHECKLISTS

Texture / Touch Checklist

Textures I Like:

- ☐ Softblankets
- ☐ Squishy toys
- ☐ Smooth fabrics
- ☐ Water play
- ☐ Sand or kinetic sand
- ☐ Stuffed animals
- ☐ Other: _____

Textures That Bother Me:

- ☐ Scratchy clothes
- ☐ Tags in shirts
- ☐ Sticky hands
- ☐ Wet or messy textures
- ☐ Certain fabrics (wool, denim, etc.)
- ☐ Lotion or soap textures
- ☐ Other: _____

Textures That Help Me Feel Calm:

- ☐ Weightedblanket
- ☐ Soft clothes
- ☐ Smooth stones or fidgets
- ☐ Pillows
- ☐ Stuffed animals
- ☐ Other: _____

SENSORY STRATEGIES CARDS

Little Tools to Help Big Feelings These cards can be printed, cut, and used whenever a child needs sensory support, here are ready-to-use options:

- **Sound / Hearing Strategy Cards**
- **Light / Visual Strategy Cards**
- **Touch / Texture Strategy Cards**
- **Body & Movement Strategy**

Cards

•  **Emotional Safety Strategy Cards**



USE HEADPHONES OR EARMUFFS



Helps when things are
too loud.



FIND A QUIET SPOT



A calm space gives your
ears a rest.



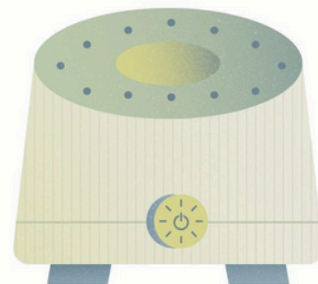
LISTEN TO SOFT MUSIC



Music can help your
brain slow down.



USE A SOUND MACHINE OR WHITE NOISE



Gentle background noise can make
other sounds feel softer.

 **WEAR
SUNGLASSES OR A
HAT**



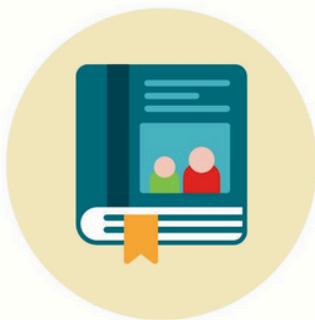
Helps when lights feel
too bright.

 **ASK TO DIM THE
LIGHTS**



Softer light can make
your eyes relax.

 **LOOK AT
SOMETHING SIMPLE
OR CALMING**



Like a blank wall, a book, or a
favorite picture.

 **CLOSE YOUR
EYES FOR A FEW
SECONDS**



A quick visual break helps reset
your brain.



HOLD A SOFT TOY OR FIDGET



Helps your hands and body
feel safe.



USE A WEIGHTED BLANKET OR LAP PAD



Gives your body
calm pressure.



CHOOSE COMFY CLOTHING



Soft fabrics help your body
feel relaxed.



TRY A SENSORY TEXTURE YOU DO LIKE



Such as smooth stones, soft
fabric, or squishy toys.



TAKE 3 DEEP BREATHS



Helps your body
slow down.



TAKE A LITTLE MOVEMENT BREAK



Walking or stretching helps reset
your brain.



GIVE YOURSELF A BIG SQUEEZE (SELF-HUG)



Deep pressure can
feel grounding.



DO A CALMING MOVEMENT



Like rocking, bouncing gently, or
slow swinging.



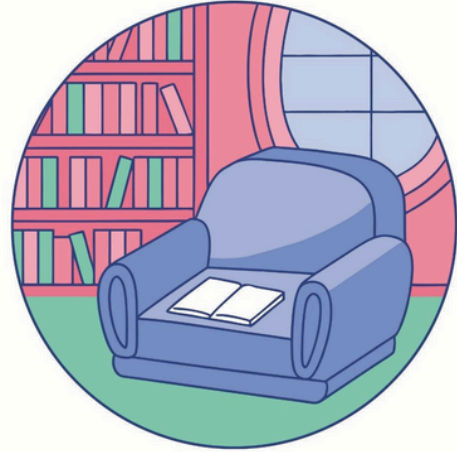
ASK FOR A BREAK



It's okay to say, "I
need a minute."



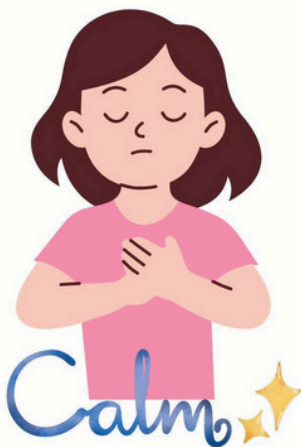
GO TO A SAFE, COZY SPOT



A quiet corner or
soft chair can help.



USE A CALMING PHRASE



Like "I'm safe," "I can take my time," or
"I'm okay."



LOOK AT OR READ A CALMING BOOK



Stories help shift your mind to
something gentle.