

SENSORY TOOLKIT FOR CHILDREN

HERE'S A GUIDE TO CREATING A SENSORY KIT TAILORED TO THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN

1. SELECTING A CHILD-FRIENDLY CONTAINER

Choose a colorful and durable container that appeals to children, such as a backpack, a colorful tote bag, or a fun-themed storage box.

2. CALMING TOOLS

- **Squishy Toys:** Include squishy balls, stress balls, or tactile toys that provide sensory stimulation and promote relaxation.
- **Fidget Toys:** Add fidget spinners or textured fidget tools to engage tactile and visual senses.
- **Weighted Lap Pad or Stuffed Animal:** Choose a soft and comforting weighted lap pad or stuffed animal.

3. VISUAL AIDS

- **Calming Visuals:** Include picture cards with calming images or illustrations, such as nature scenes, animals, or favorite characters.
- **Kaleidoscope or Visual Stimulation Toys:** Offer toys that provide mesmerizing visual patterns and promote relaxation.

4. AUDITORY TOOLS

- **Noise-Canceling Earmuffs:** Include child-sized earmuffs to reduce noise sensitivity and provide auditory relief in loud environments.
- **Soothing Music or Audio Stories:** Provide headphones and pre-loaded audio files with calming music, lullabies, or soothing stories.

5. SENSORY SOOTHERS

- **Scented Stickers or Scratch-and-Sniff Cards:** Offer scented stickers or cards with pleasant aromas for sensory exploration.

6. SELF-REGULATION TOOLS

- **Breathing Tools:** Include pinwheels to facilitate deep breathing exercises and promote relaxation.
- **Relaxation Cards:** Provide visual prompts or relaxation cards with simple mindfulness exercises or calming affirmations.

7. ADDITIONAL ITEMS

- **Comfort Items:** Add a small stuffed animal, a cozy blanket, or a favorite toy for comfort and reassurance during stressful situations.
- **Snacks and Water:** Pack healthy snacks, juice boxes, or a water bottle to keep children nourished and hydrated.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PARENTS

USING A SENSORY TOOL KIT WITH THEIR CHILD

1. UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS

Familiarize yourself with your child's sensory preferences and sensitivities. Pay attention to their reactions to different sensory stimuli and environments to better understand what calms or overstimulates them.

2. EXPLAINING THE PURPOSE OF THE KIT

Introduce the sensory tool kit to your child and explain its purpose in helping them regulate. Emphasize that the tools are meant to provide comfort and support during challenging moments.

3. SELECTING TOOLS TOGETHER

Involve your child in selecting sensory tools from the kit that they find comforting. Encourage them to choose items based on what helps them feel calm and relaxed.

4. CREATING A CALMING SPACE

Designate a quiet area where your child can use the sensory tools without distractions.

5. RECOGNIZING SIGNS OF OVERSTIMULATION

Be vigilant for signs that your child may be experiencing sensory overload or heightened stress levels. Look for cues such as agitation, irritability, withdrawal, or sensory-seeking behaviors.

6. OFFERING BREAKS WHEN NEEDED

Encourage your child to take breaks from when they start to feel overwhelmed. Help them recognize their own signs of distress and offer support in finding ways to self-regulate.

7. USING TOOLS PROACTIVELY

Introduce sensory tools to your child proactively, before they become overwhelmed. Incorporate sensory activities into their daily routine that can carry over to the worship service.

8. MODELING RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Demonstrate relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, stretching, or using sensory tools like stress balls. Encourage your child to imitate these calming strategies when they need to unwind.

9. ENCOURAGING COMMUNICATION

Foster open communication with your child about their sensory experiences and emotions. Encourage them to express how they're feeling and what tools or activities help them feel better.

10. REINFORCING POSITIVE COPING STRATEGIES

Praise your child for using their sensory tools effectively and coping with sensory challenges. Reinforce positive behaviors and encourage them to continue practicing self-regulation techniques.

11. ADJUSTING STRATEGIES AS NEEDED

Be flexible and willing to adjust your approach based on your child's changing needs and preferences. Experiment with different sensory tools and techniques to find what works best for them.

12. SEEKING SUPPORT

If you're concerned about your child's sensory processing or emotional regulation, don't hesitate to reach out for support from the church staff or a volunteer. They can provide personalized strategies to help your child thrive. You're not alone, and there are resources available to help you.