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A Little About Me!


My name is Bailey Relford, and I am an Occupational Therapist, specializing in sensory processing and feeding. I am originally from Texas but lived in Alaska from 2020-2023. I love pediatrics and have spent most of my career focusing on helping little people grow to their full potential and feel supported by the adults and environments around them! I am a mother to two rambunctious boys and currently live back in Texas where I own my own community-based practice, Dandelion Occupational Therapy.



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GOAL OF THIS PRESENTATION

Everyone has **sensory preferences**! As caregivers to children with unique needs, we need to **understand** their preferences and work with them to teach them appropriate **coping** strategies. This will help them remain **regulated** and engage in meaningful occupations.



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WHAT SENSES DO WE USE EVERY DAY?

1. Vision
2. Hearing
3. Smell
4. Taste
5. Touch
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.



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BODY AWARENESS (PROPRIOCEPTION)

Specialized cells in our **joints** tell our body where it is **in space** and tell us **when, where, and how** to move.



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MOVEMENT (VESTIBULAR)

Parts of our **inner ear** tell our body if we are **in motion** and what **direction** we may be headed in.



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INTERNAL SENSATIONS (INTEROCEPTION)

Receptors and **chemicals** in our organs relay **vitals** such as heart rate, respiratory rate, fullness, thirst, hunger, pain, nausea, etc. to parts of our brain to determine our **physical needs**.

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One piece of the Puzzle

Figure 5. Pyramid of Learning. (Williams & Shellenberger, 1-4)

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Human Brain Development

Synapse formation is dependent on early experiences

Synapse formation begins declining before Age 3

Beacon House
Therapeutic Services and Trauma Team

Children's brains develop from the bottom up.

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FEELING SAFE

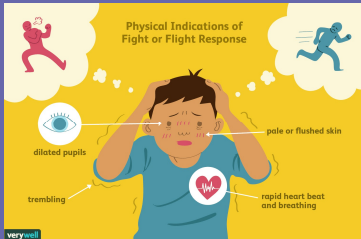


- Our sensory system is wired to help us decide if our environment is **safe or not**
- Sensory information is stored in the **most basic** parts of our brain
- Therefore, sensory information can trigger our "**fight, flight, freeze**" response

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TRAUMA'S ROLE

- Chronic trauma **re-wires** our brain and affects how it **understands** information
- Our job as **caregivers** is to help the child feel safe and help form new, **positive** connections



Physical Indications of Fight or Flight Response

dilated pupils

trembling

pale or flushed skin

rapid heart beat and breathing

verywell

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RESPONDING APPROPRIATELY

- Remembering how a child's past, in addition to their sensory needs, may affect **behavior** is crucial
- A child new to your home may require **extra time** and **patience** to feel safe
- Practicing **TBRI principles** along with the strategies we are about to discuss can help result in the best **outcomes** for everyone!

IDEAL Response

Immediate
(3 seconds or less)

Direct
(engagement strategies)


Efficient
(levels of response)

Action-Based
(behavioral scripts)

Leveled at the Behavior
(and not the child)

#IDEALRESPONSE #TBRI

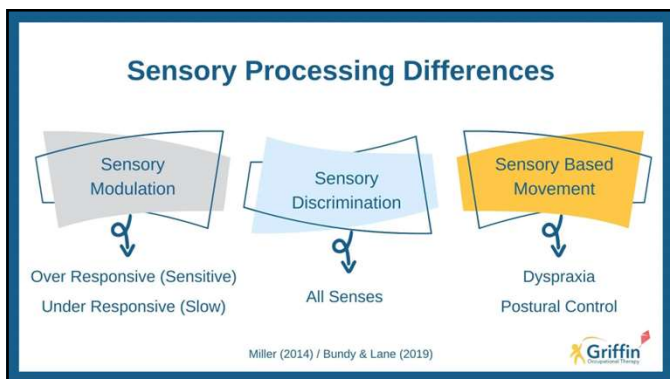
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WHAT DO I NEED?



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GENERAL STRATEGIES

1. Create **predictability**
2. Add sensory activities into **daily routines**
3. Help children learn more about **self-regulation** in terms they understand

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WHAT IS "HEAVY WORK"?

Check out the links in the notes for more ideas!

Around the house	Outside	In the Classroom
Taking out the trash	Riding a tricycle or bicycle	Playing Twister
Pushing a vacuum cleaner	Playing catch (perhaps with a weighted ball)	Squishing play-dough
Mopping or sweeping	Swinging on monkey bars	Blowing bubbles
Carrying a full laundry basket	Climbing on the playground	Stacking chairs
Carrying groceries	Jumping rope or trampoline	Cleaning white boards
Cooking (such as stirring or kneading bread dough)	Playing hopscotch	Marching or running in place
Shoveling snow or raking leaves	Wheelbarrow walking (walking on her hands while you hold her feet)	Doing push-ups (either on the floor or against the wall)
Pushing the shopping cart in a store	Swimming	

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"TIME-IN"

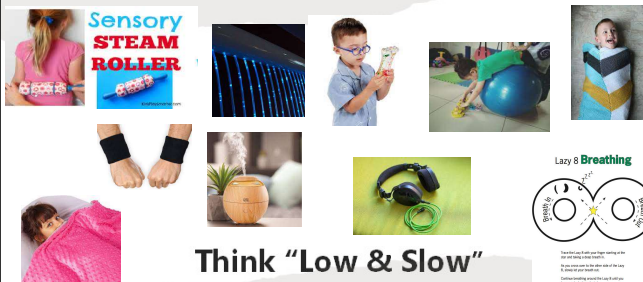
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STRATEGIES FOR OVER-RESPONSIVE KIDS

- **Vision:** Dim lights, watch a lava lamp, play with calming tube
- **Hearing:** Play soft music, repeat a phrase, use headphones to cancel out noise, white noise machine, calm voice, count to 10
- **Movement:** Rock slowly, rocking chair, lay over large ball
- **Smell:** lavender or vanilla, diffusers, comforting smell
- **Body Awareness:** Breathe deeply, weighted objects, wrap up tightly in blanket, sit in a beanbag, play "steamroller" with a foam roller or ball
- **Retreat:** "Time In" (rather than time out)

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STRATEGIES FOR OVER-RESPONSIVE KIDS



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STRATEGIES FOR UNDER-RESPONSIVE KIDS

- **Vision:** Bright lights, glitter bottle, fun color paper/pens
- **Hearing:** Loud, rhythmic music, "be the band" game
- **Movement:** jumping, running, movement interspersed during sitting activities (e.g., spelling test), obstacle courses, controlled spinning*
- **Body Awareness:** Push-pull activities, animal walks, foot-rest when seated
- **Smell:** Mint, Cinnamon, Fresh air, smelly markers/pens
- **Touch:** Light wind from window or fan, fidget toys with light touch e.g., feathers, messy play, tickles, playing outside in the cold
 - ***beware of past trauma before using touch as a strategy*

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STRATEGIES FOR UNDER-RESPONSIVE KIDS



Think "Fast Blast"


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SENSORY DETECTIVE



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CLASSROOM STRATEGIES



- Use a "wigggle" seat cushion, kick band, or ball chair
- Provide a choice of fidgets (silent)
- Provide smaller, less cluttered work-spaces when able
- Suggest chores/jobs such as delivering messages to the office, stacking chairs, helping take out recycling, snow shoveling
- Frequent "body breaks"
- Access to calming space as needed
- Use a calming activity after recess, lunch, and specials
- Use of headphones, compression garments, or weighted vest/lap pad

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WHEN TO GET SUPPORT

- These strategies are meant to help you learn to **better understand** your child's needs and how to meet them. If you are having **difficulty** using them, or still not seeing results, further **evaluation** may be worth bringing up with your pediatrician. An **Occupational Therapist** can help you build a personalized routine for your family and your child.