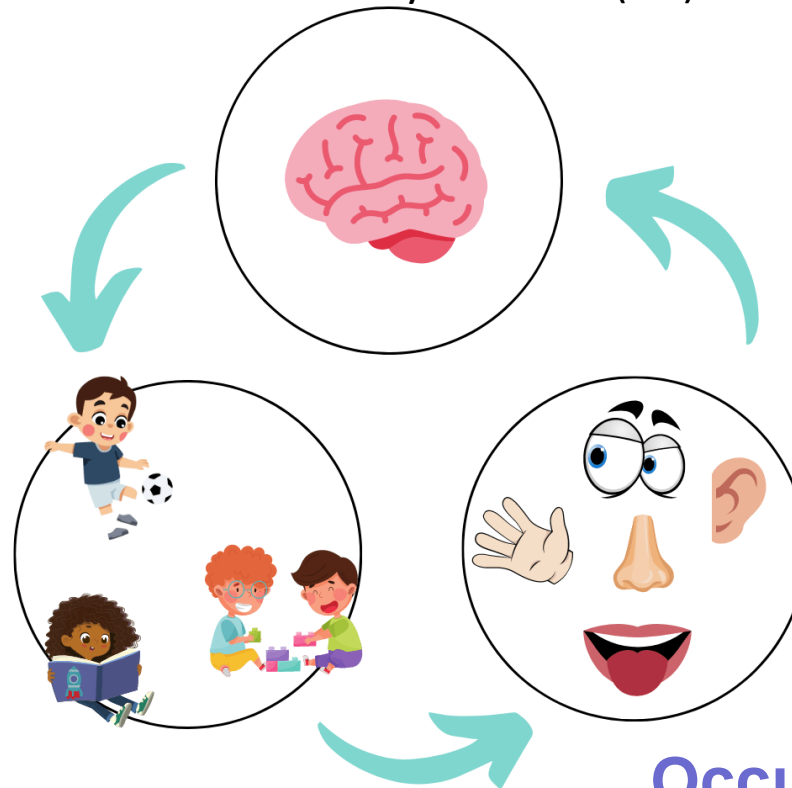


# Understanding Sensory Differences and Impact on Activities

With Amy Richards (OT)

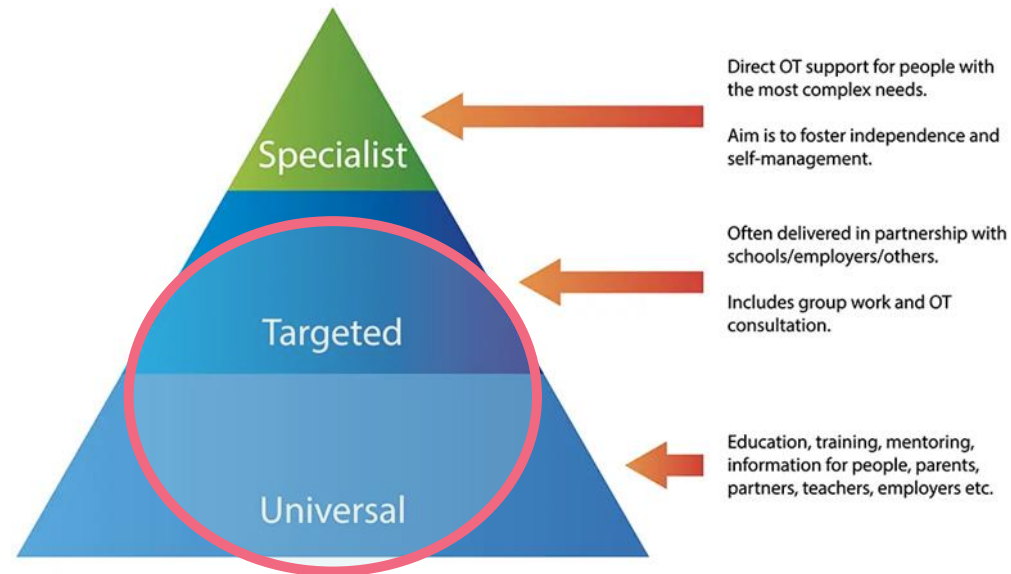


**Occupational Therapy  
Workshop for parents**



# Intro

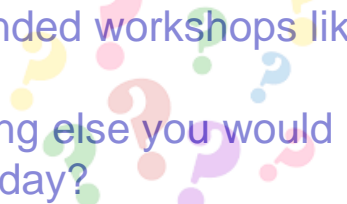
- Amy Richards
- Occupational Therapist
- Based at Stormont House one day a week (usually Weds)



# Aims



1. Background: What is OT?
2. Knowledge: What are sensory differences, and how can they impact on activities?
3. Application: What practical strategies can we use to support independence?

- 
- Have you attended workshops like this before?
  - Is there anything else you would like to get out of today?

# Introductions

- Your name, your child's name & age
- Your child's main strengths / what they like?
- Area you wanted to discuss today / main challenge?



Maintaining  
Confidentiality



# Part 1: Background – intro to OT



# What is Occupational Therapy?

- An occupational therapist helps people of all ages overcome challenges completing **everyday tasks or activities** – what we call ‘occupations’.

Source: Royal College of Occupational Therapy- About Occupational Therapy



# What is Occupational Therapy?

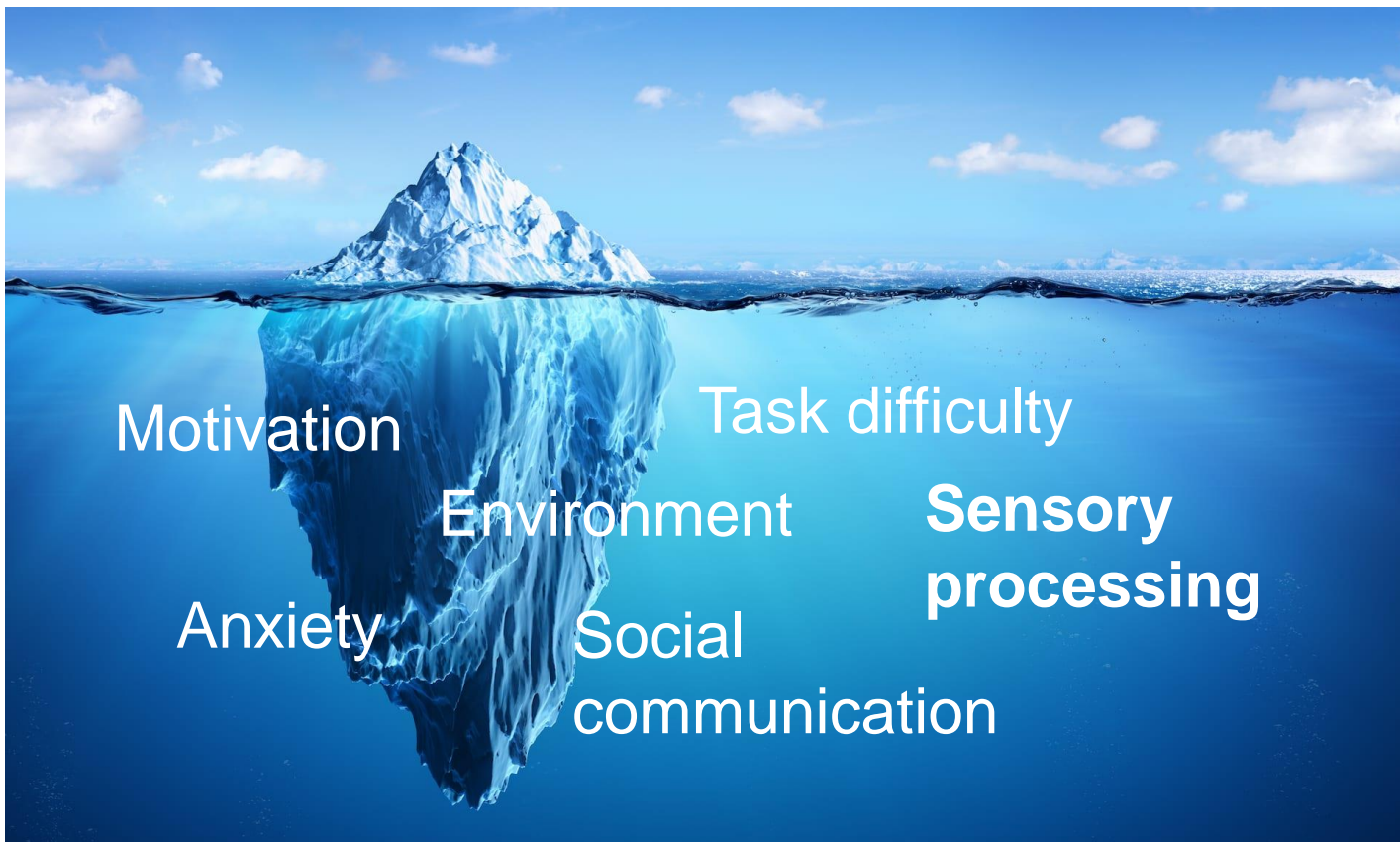
## PARTICIPATION



# Examples of 'occupations'

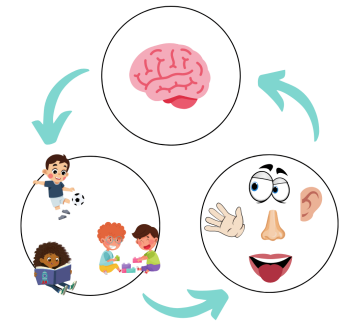






# Part 2:

## What are sensory differences? And how can they impact on developing skills?



# How many senses do we have?



©DESIGNALIKE

Can you name them all?



# How many senses do we have?

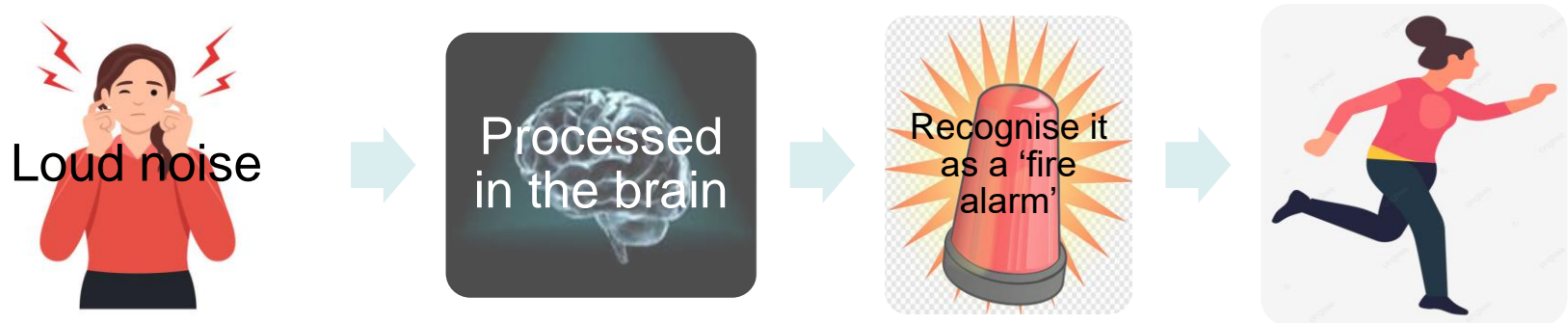
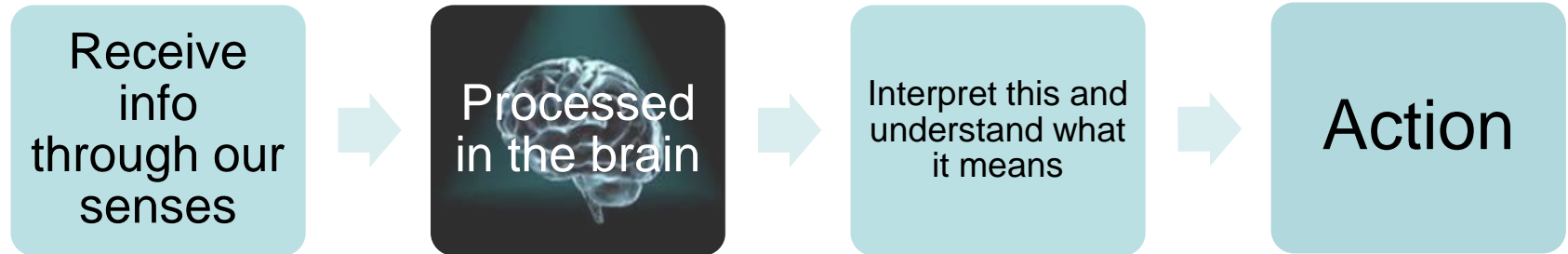
8



# What are the 8 senses?



# Sensory processing

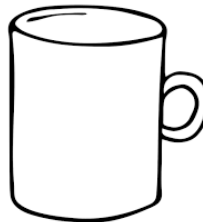


# Difficulties with sensory processing

- Difficulty organising and responding to sensory input appropriately
- 5-16.5% of people have sensory processing challenges
- Higher for ASD (between 69% to 95% depending on the study) & ADHD
- **This can have a real impact on our emotional regulation and our ability to concentrate, learn and engage in activities**



# Cup analogy: Over and under sensitive



TOO MUCH

Just right

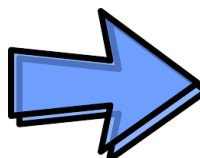
Not enough



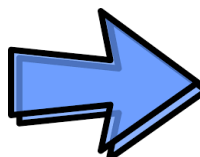
How may a child  
present if they have a...?



'Big cup' for  
touch



'Big cup' for  
proprioception  
& vestibular



# Quiz

May enjoy messy play,  
hugs or others touching  
them, high pain threshold,  
touching lots of objects  
with different textures

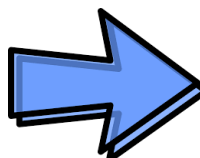
May crave lots of  
movement like  
rocking, swinging,  
running, jumping,  
flapping



How may a child  
present if they have a...



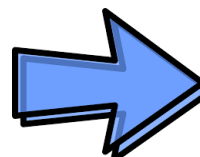
'Small cup'  
for vision



May struggle with bright  
lights or messy areas-  
find it hard to concentrate

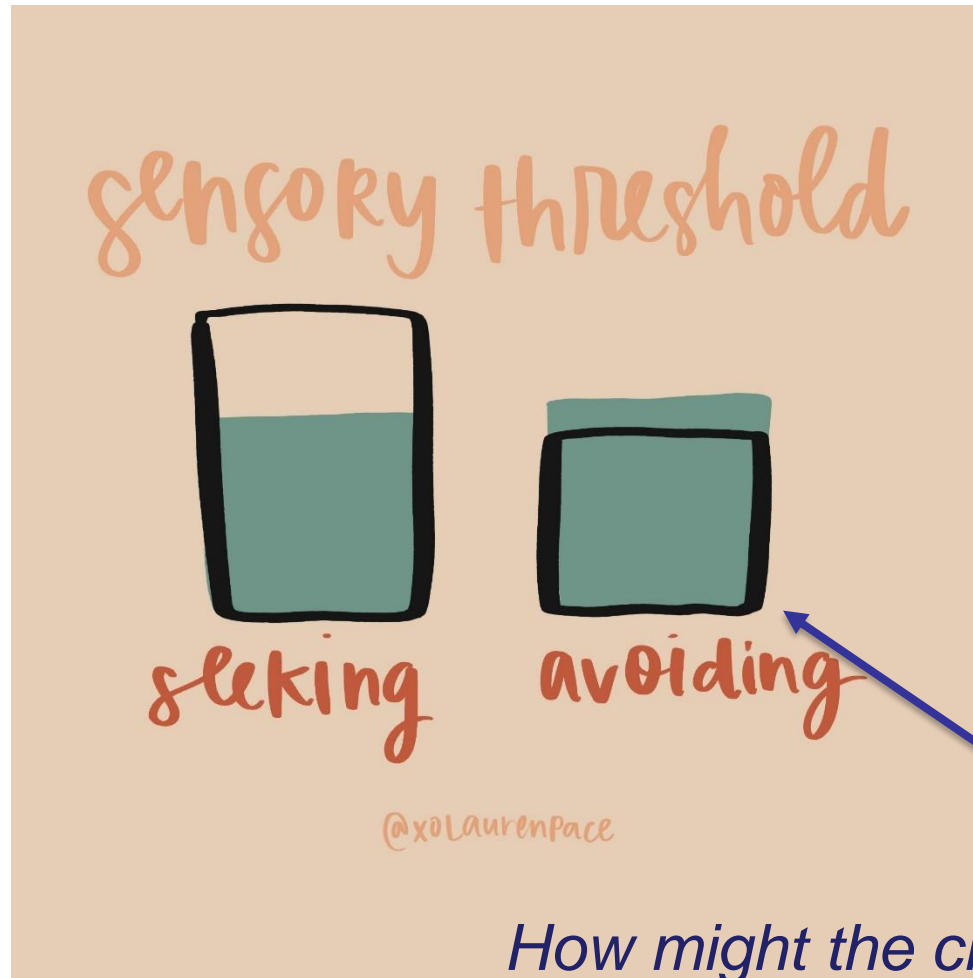


'Small cup'  
for noise



May find loud noises  
distressing (e.g.  
shopping mall, tube,  
lunch hall)

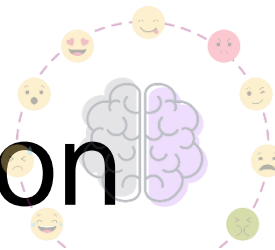




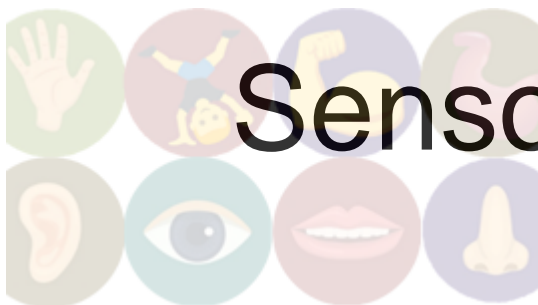
*How might the child present like this?*



# Emotional Regulation

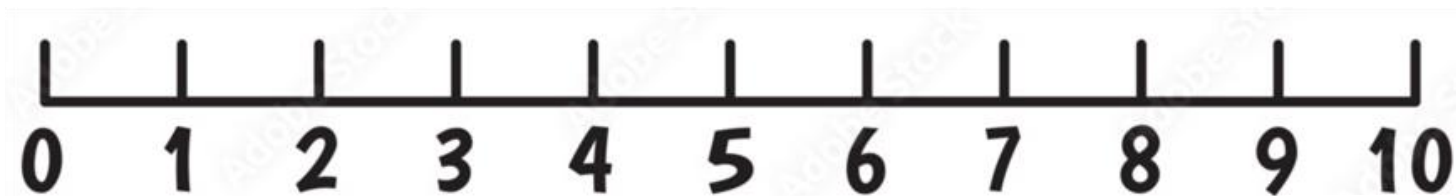


## Sensory processing

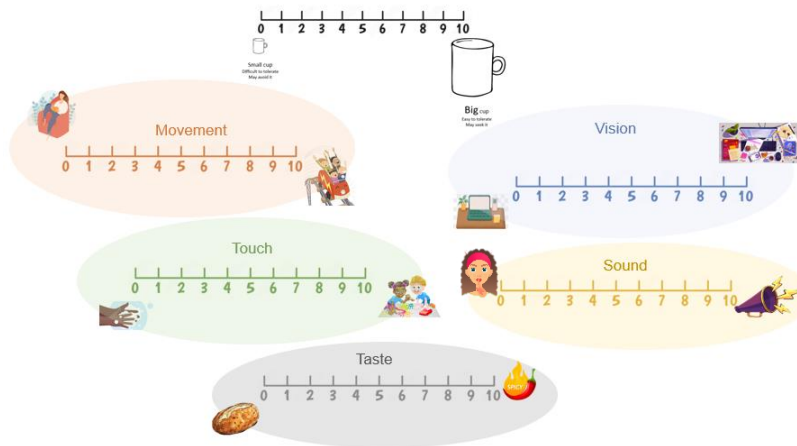


What are **your** sensory preferences?

What are **your child's** sensory preferences?



**Small cup**  
Difficult to tolerate  
May avoid it



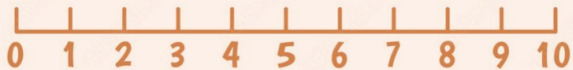
**Big cup**  
Easy to tolerate  
May seek it



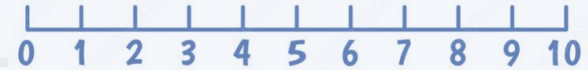


- 1) What are **your** sensory preferences?
- 2) What about on a 'bad' day?

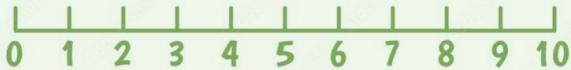
### Movement



### Vision



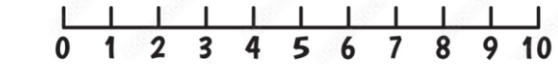
### Touch



### Sound



### Taste



Small cup  
Difficult to tolerate  
May avoid it



Big cup  
Easy to tolerate  
May seek it

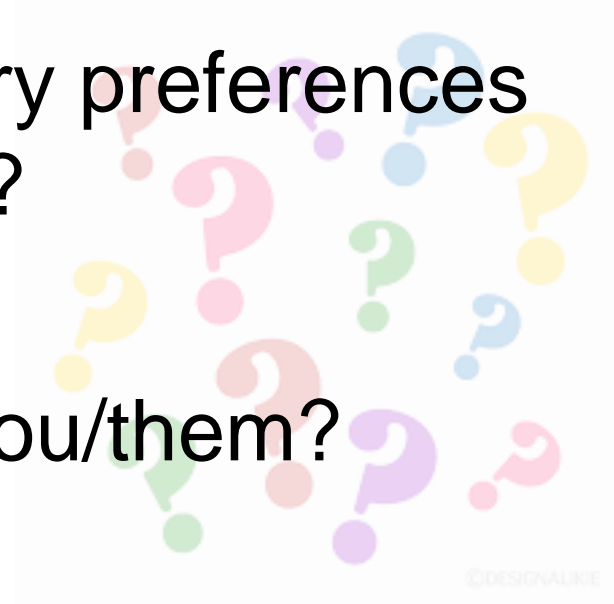


# Feedback

What are your sensory preferences?

Can you name any sensory preferences  
of your child?

How does this impact on you/them?



# Part 3

## Application: What practical strategies can we use to support independence?





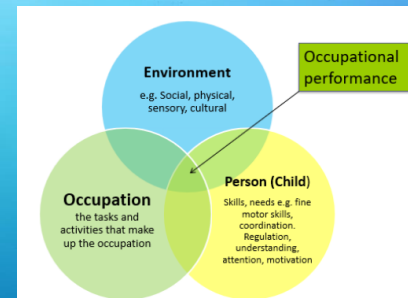
# OT & Sensory Processing

- OT can help when a young person's sensory processing impacts on their ability to carry out **daily activities**
- We don't try and alter their sensory profile directly
- Instead, we focus on trying to help young people complete a task by focusing on adapting the **task**, the **environment** and looking at the situation as whole (**holistically**)






# 1) Start here! look at the situation holistically

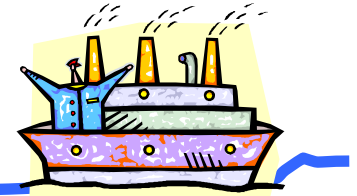
What's going on below the surface?



# Child / environment /task

Child's Name		
Child (person)	Environment	Task/Occupation
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disability/diagnosis</li> <li>Learning needs</li> <li>Motivation</li> <li>Mood</li> <li>Developmental level</li> <li>Understanding</li> <li>Communication Skills</li> <li>Attention</li> <li>Regulation (emotional/sensory)</li> <li>Sitting and posture</li> <li>Fine motor skills and coordination</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distractions</li> <li>Resources</li> <li>Where?</li> <li>What and who else is in the environment?</li> <li>Distractions e.g. noise, visual</li> <li>Positioning / sensory aspects</li> <li>Who and how much support can we offer?</li> <li>Cultural expectations</li> <li>Influence of peers</li> <li>Influence of adults</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Task too difficult</li> <li>Is it realistic?</li> <li>Are there sensory components of the task that are hard to cope with?</li> <li>Do they have the right equipment?</li> </ul>

Refusing to go  
to the toilet in  
school



Person: Sensory preferences

**Environment: Sensory environment**

**Task: Not motivating, different routine to home (need to ask)**



## 2) Adapting the task and the environment

- Once you know what factors are below the surface, consider whether you can change anything about the task or environment to help the child

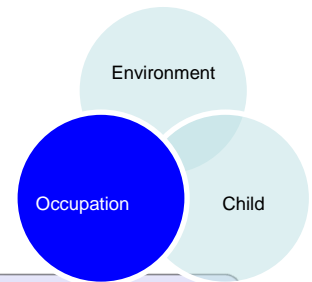




- What strategies do you use already to support with your child's sensory needs?
- Can you think of specific examples of when this has helped?



# The task



Preparing them beforehand

Using sensory preferences to motivate and engage

Sensory input before/during the activity

Opportunities to be active throughout the day

Grading / breaking the task down

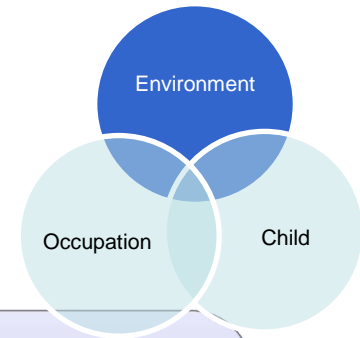
Motivation

Understanding why the task is important

Choice



# The environment



What else is happening in the space?

Reducing sensory input:  
noise, visual, lighting, smells







# The young person

Developing a  
'toolbox'

Increasing their  
understanding of  
sensory processing  
and strategies

Providing a safe  
alternative e.g.  
biting – chewy toy /  
crunching ice

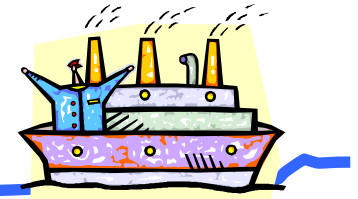
Visuals

Clear routine

Communication  
method that reflects  
their level of  
understanding



Refusing to go  
to the toilet in  
school



Person: Sensory preferences

Environment: Sensory environment

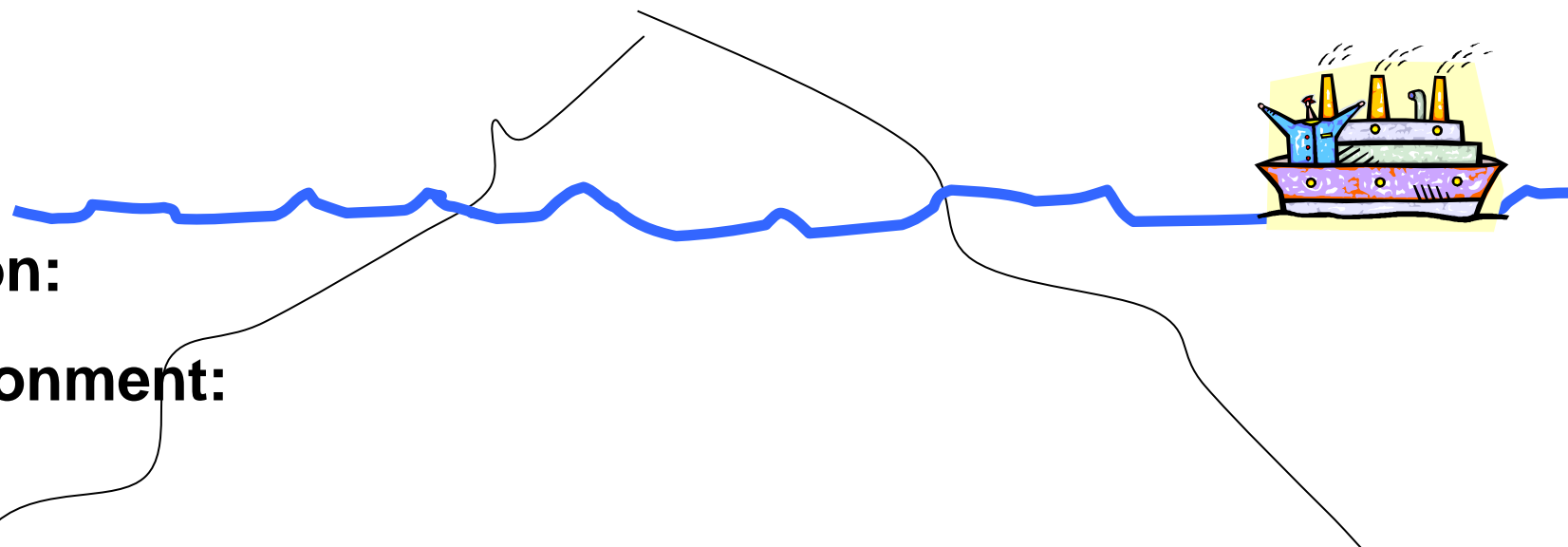
Task: Not motivating, different routine to home (need to ask)

Strategy	What needs to happen?	Who can help?
Environmental strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Go at quiet times when other children not around</li> <li>- Put toilet time on visual timetable &amp; provide a routine</li> </ul>	TA to support and remind child to go to the toilet at 'quiet times' agreed with class teacher and Senco	TA / Senco / Class teacher
Task strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Could provide a reward chart for going to the toilet successfully</li> </ul>	TA to acknowledge when child has achieved this and provide reward	TA / Class teacher

# Your turn

- Can you think of a difficulty your child is having? Perhaps with one of the 'occupations' we mentioned at the start?
- Explore the problem - What do you think the underlying factors are below the surface?
- Can you change anything relating to the task and environment?

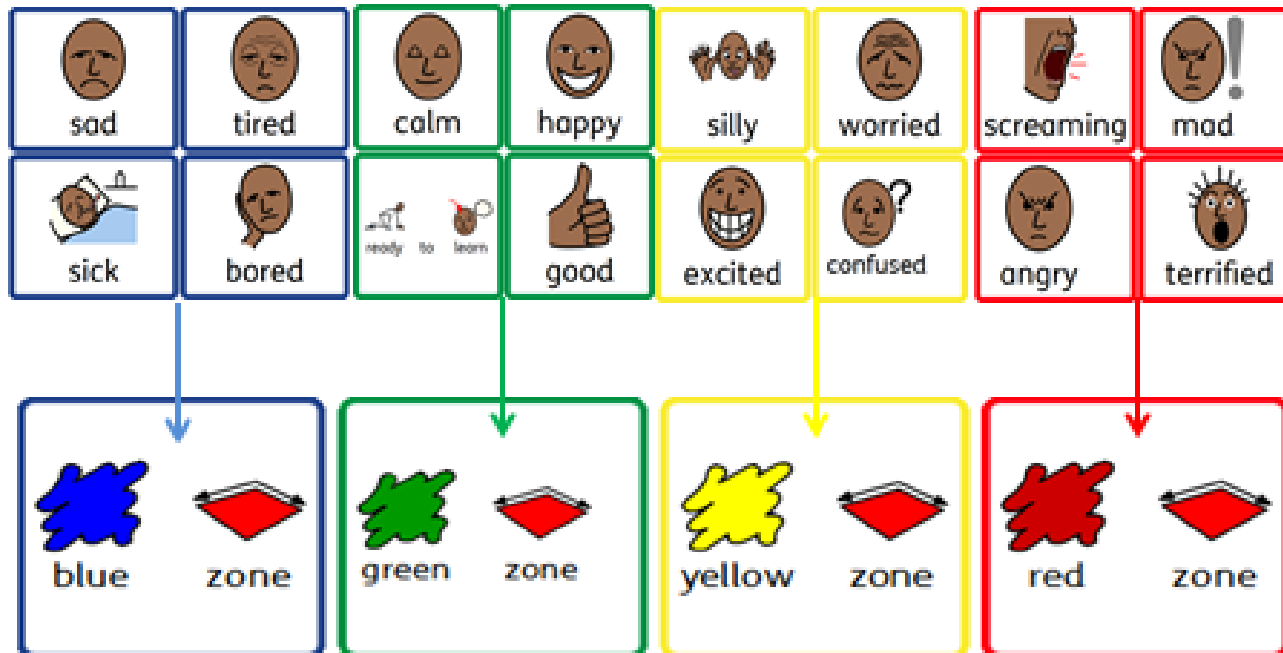




## Task:

Strategy	What needs to happen?	Who can help?

# Zones of Regulation





# Key takeaways

- It's important to try and understand the sensory needs of young people
- We all have different sensory profiles- and this can change
- We can be over-sensitive or under-sensitive to various senses
- Adapting the task and environment can help if there are sensory differences
- Sensory is just one piece of the puzzle though- remember to look at things holistically (iceberg)
- Try and target the underlying factors that are below the surface



# ANY QUESTIONS?





Scan me!



**Please complete  
this anonymous  
feedback form**

