

# **Super Sensory Summer Survival Kit**



**How to Have A Great Summer With Your Sensory Kid  
Without Spending An Arm And A Leg On Expensive  
Camps, Daycare, or Special Education Courses**



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# UNDERSTANDING AND ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S SENSORY NEEDS

## HOW TO STAY CALM AND PRESENT THIS BUSY SUMMER SEASON

When life gets hectic, remember to pause. To help you remember to “respond” rather than “react” to life’s stressful situations, use Pause Breath to stop and take a moment. It’s a powerful reminder for both kids and adults.

Check the appendix for a Pause Breath Poster

*By Giselle Shardlow*  
*Kids Yoga Stories*



## HOW TO SET BETTER GOALS FOR YOUR IEP

Wondering if a child's IEP Goal makes sense for their future? Ask yourself, "Do I, as an adult, use this skill?" If the answer is NO, you do not use the skill mentioned in the goal on a regular basis, then it's probably time to let that goal go and find one that makes sense long term. If the answer is YES, I use this skill all the time, then it's time to dig in and make it an awesome goal in the IEP!

*By Catherine Witcher, M.Ed*

# HANDLING TANTRUMS, MELTDOWNS, AND OUTBURSTS

## HOW TO MANAGE ANXIETY THIS SUMMER THROUGH DEEP BREATHING

Deep breathing is a skill that needs to be taught and must be practiced. One way to do this is to have your child lay down and place a small stuffed animal on their belly and see how the animal rises and falls with each breath. Other ways to initiate deep breathing are to blow a pinwheel to watch it spin or go outside and blow bubbles!

*By Christina Kozlowsky*  
*Sensory Therapy Box*



## HOW TO HANDLE YOUR CHILD'S PUBLIC MELTDOWNS LIKE A BOSS



When your child is melting down in public, it may feel like everyone and their grandmother is watching; but rest assured -- you will get through this. Do what you need to do to get yourself grounded and start small by counting backwards from 10 to 1 in your head. Inhale and exhale with each count and then tell yourself: this too shall pass.

Check the appendix for Tantrum vs Sensory Meltdown cards

*By Kori Tomelden*  
*Kori at Home*



# HANDLING TANTRUMS, MELTDOWNS, AND OUTBURSTS

## HOW TO SURVIVE BEING IN THE CAR WITH AN EMOTIONALLY DYSREGULATED CHILD



### SAFETY FIRST!

1. Pull off to the side of the road and manage the meltdown the way you would on solid ground: calm voice, close and connected, encouraging coping skills and distracting as needed.

2. Once your child is able, my favorite

thing to do is turn on an audio book for the rest of the drive, because it allows my son to focus on something else and relax.

*By Shawna Wingert  
Not The Former Things*

## THE FIRST STEP WHEN YOUR CHILD HAS A MELTDOWN

Whether you're trying to leave the pool or visiting the grandparents, if your child has a meltdown, give empathy to yourself first. Dr. Kristin Neff, compassion researcher and autism mom, talks about listening to what our "inner ally" would say, rather than our "inner enemy". Maybe you say to yourself, "Lots of parents struggle with their child's meltdowns; I am not alone. I am feeling frustrated and disappointed. This meltdown is just a sign that she needs my support; it's not evidence that I'm a failure as a parent." Comfort yourself first, before attempting to comfort your child.

*Cecilia and Jason Hilkey  
Happily Family*



# OVERCOMING SENSORY STRUGGLES (SLEEP, TRANSITIONS, BEHAVIOR, FOCUS)

## HOW TO HANDLE TRAVEL WITH KIDS WHO HAVE SENSORY-BASED ANXIETY

Some good proactive preparations can make all the difference! Carry Vibes earplugs for noises that can overwhelm your child. Pack “safe” go-to foods that you know your picky eater will eat. Bring Post-it notes to cover automatic flusher sensors. Bring only clothes, shoes and socks your child has lived in for a while, to avoid unexpected clothing battles. And lastly, don’t forget to schedule a break in the middle of the day to avoid sensory overload.

*By Natasha Daniels  
AT Parenting Survival*



## HOW TO WORK ON ATTENTION THROUGH OUTDOOR SENSORY ACTIVITIES THIS SUMMER



Summer is a great time to get outdoors! There are so many sensory activities you can do outside that can have benefits to help with attention and focus. Try to find ways to get outside at least once a day if not more.

You could:

- Go on a bike ride
- Walk outside and do a nature scavenger hunt
- Go for a swim
- Play in the sand or dirt
- Jump rope

# OVERCOMING SENSORY STRUGGLES

## (SLEEP, TRANSITIONS, BEHAVIOR, FOCUS)

If the weather doesn't allow for you to go outside set up some sensory bins with outside materials inside.

You could try:

- Water
- Sand
- Dirt
- Rocks
- Flowers
- Leaves

Try doing an outdoor-inspired activity before needing to do a seated activity to help increase their attention and focus.

*By Sara Anderson*

*Learning for a Purpose*



## HOW TO INTRODUCE CHILDREN TO SOCIAL STORIES THIS SUMMER

If you have ever given your child a pep talk about how to behave before a new situation (going to the dentist, a birthday party, or the first day of school), you have made a basic social story.

Social stories help children to prepare for new situations, outline what other people may do and say and give children an idea of what they can do and say. They turn a complicated social situation into a step-by-step guide of how to behave and give children tools for getting through any social experience with success!

Summer is full of new situations. Going to a pool, camping, or even playing outside without direct parental supervision can all benefit from a good social story, told in advance.



# OVERCOMING SENSORY STRUGGLES (SLEEP, TRANSITIONS, BEHAVIOR, FOCUS)



How to make a social story:

- Choose one topic and stick to it.
- Use first-person or second-person narrative.
- Make it detailed, answering questions such as “Where? When? Who? Why? And then what?” but keep it simple.
- Include the dialogue and even offer some phrases that children can use when appropriate.

To make the experience even more profound and educational, find social stories with pictures on-line – or even reenact them with puppets!

*By Liska Myers*

*Adventure in a Box*

## WHY YOU SHOULD USE RED LIGHT AT NIGHT

A dark room is best for sleep; however, some children are afraid or just want to be able to see in their rooms when they wake during the night. If you use a red light it will not stop the production of melatonin which is the sleepy hormone that allows your child to go back to sleep in a quick manner or stay asleep for a longer period of time.

*By Brenda McSween*

*Parenting Foundations*





# OVERCOMING SENSORY STRUGGLES (SLEEP, TRANSITIONS, BEHAVIOR, FOCUS)

## HOW TO GET SENSORY KIDS AND RELUCTANT SWIMMERS IN THE WATER

Give the child some control! Offer different ways to get in the water — ladder, jumping, sliding in from the wall.

Pull out a visual schedule and offer the child choices of activities that she can put in the order that she would like to have them happen (first kicking at the wall, next bobs under the water, last jumps off of the wall).

*By Claire and Lauren  
The Inspired Treehouse*



## HOW TO GET MORE OUT OF THE UPCOMING SCHOOL YEAR THROUGH DOWNSIZING THIS SUMMER

The more "stuff" your child has, the more stuff they have to manage. For kids with Executive Function struggles, managing things can be overwhelming, so being intentional about what stuff we allow into our lives can be a game changer. In our consumer culture, we tend to collect a lot of stuff: clothing, toys, books, sporting goods, even emails. But to what end?

Try this: This summer, plan some days to massively downsize the stuff you and your child have down to the essentials you truly value. INTENTIONALLY go through closets, drawers, bookshelves, basements, to create space for the things that are most important to you and that you really want to invest time and energy into. In the end, you'll feel more free, and the results will positively impact the school year!

*By Seth Perler*

# BUILDING LIFE-LONG SKILLS FOR SENSORY KIDS (SOCIAL, FINE MOTOR, CHARACTER, ETC.)

## HOW TO PROMOTE FLEXIBILITY IN YOUR ADOLESCENT/TEEN

Rigidity is a common factor in poor self-regulation which leads to intense reactions when there are unexpected changes in routines. To promote flexibility in your adolescent or teen, use checklists! When you use a checklist, it can change from day to day but the routine of checking off tasks will remain the same.

*By Laurie McLean*

*Life with a Side of the Unexpected*

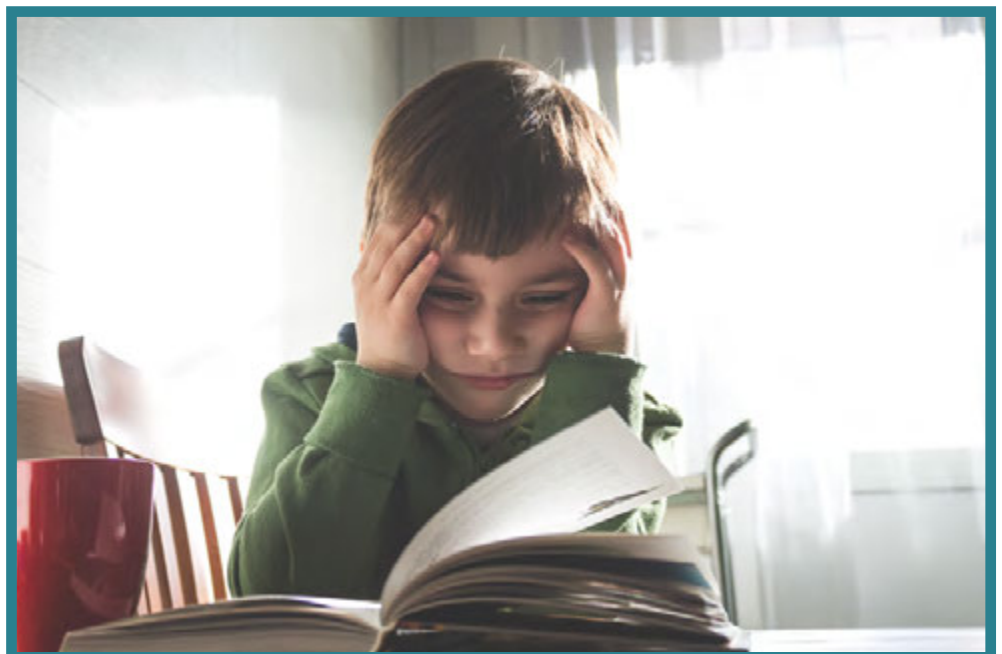


## HOW TO HELP YOUR KIDS ORGANIZE THEMSELVES WHEN THEY STRUGGLE WITH EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

The best way to help your kiddos organize themselves despite executive function challenges is to think in baby steps. Help them start using a calendar by meeting with them daily to go over the plan for the next day. After a while, switch to weekly check-ins, then monthly. With plenty of support, your kiddos will begin to internalize this type of planning and will become better organized.

*By Colleen Kessler*

*Raising Lifelong Learners*



# BUILDING LIFE-LONG SKILLS FOR SENSORY KIDS (SOCIAL, FINE MOTOR, CHARACTER, ETC.)

## HOW TO INTRODUCE LETTERS TO YOUR KIDS

- Have your child start out writing lowercase letters. This is important because when they start to read, most of the words are in lowercase letters.
- Remind your child to use their “helper hand,” opposite of their writing hand, to stabilize the page and hold it down while they write.
- Ensure your child is sitting at the right size of table with their feet flat on the floor to create the stability needed to move their eyes and hands with precision.



*By Alene Villaneda*  
*ILS Learning Corner*

## HOW TO MAINTAIN MOTOR MEMORY THIS SUMMER



Do you ever find that a child may learn a new motor skill (i.e. skipping) only to forget it rather quickly? Here are 3 tips to help children retain motor skills over the summer:

1. Practice. The key factor in remembering a motor plan is to practice.
2. Vary the environment. It is crucial to practice the skill in the real environment where the child will need to use the skill.

3. Space out practicing different but similar skills. Work on improving mastery of a specific motor skill and space out practicing new but similar skills.

*By Margaret Rice*  
*Your Therapy Source*

# BEYOND SENSORY



## 5 STRATEGIES TO HELP PREPARE YOUR AUTISTIC CHILD FOR A TRIP OR VACATION

If you're traveling this summer with an autistic or sensory kid, then you'll be happy to know that the better you can prepare them for that upcoming trip or vacation, the smoother it will go. Here are some strategies to help you prepare them:

1. Break down the vacation into small details (when it's taking place, where they're going, who will be there, what they'll be doing there, etc.)
2. Use, or write your own, social stories about the vacation
3. Show relevant videos or photos of where you will be going and/or who you will be visiting (useful tools include social media, Google Street View, YouTube, and websites of the place(s) you'll be visiting)
4. Give your child a copy of the itinerary or put together a visual schedule
5. Pack a travel sensory pack, together with your child, filled with travel-friendly calm down tools

*By Dyan Robson  
And Next Comes L*



# SENSORY BREAKS

## HOW TO MODIFY YOUR HOME SENSORY ROOM FOR DECREASED OVER-REACTIVITY

1. Choose rustic farmhouse colors. More neutral and more soothing colors to the eye.
2. Closed storage for less visual stimulation. Out of sight, out of mind. Many children with sensory processing dysfunction are overly visual and rapid thinkers.
3. Dimmer switch for room or lamps for relaxed mood setting.
4. Rhythmic movement in the room.
5. Rhythm = Regulation.
6. Tactile deep pressure nooks around the room can give children improved focus and body awareness.
7. Two points of suspension for rhythmic movement in space that's predictable and organizing to the child's Central Nervous System.

*By Alex Lopiccolo*



## HOW TO SNEAK LEARNING INTO SENSORY PLAY



Make those sensory play moments educational by talking to your kids as they play and pointing out interesting features. For instance, while playing with Oobleck talk to the kids about what they notice when they apply force or remove the force. You can also demonstrate how it turns solid under pressure and liquid when pressure is removed. Ask kids to think of cool ways you could use these features to solve real life problems. You will love the creativity of their answers as they play and learn!

*By Shelley Brewer  
STEAM Powered Family*

# SENSORY BREAKS

## HOW TO ENTERTAIN YOUR CHILDREN FOR FREE THIS SUMMER

### USE WATER!

- Turn this simplest of materials into super sensory invitations to play:
- Offer a bucket full of paint brushes and paint all over the sidewalk
- Freeze it with food coloring to make ice blocks and build sculptures
- Fill spray bottles and head outdoors for target practice
- Add juice or fruits and make your own popsicles
- Add fresh lavender to your kiddie pool for a cooling sensory tub
- Add a drop of dish soap and a whisk and whip up a fun, bubbly play tub
- Set up a neighbourhood 'car wash' for bikes and trikes
- Pop a tray of water in the freezer overnight to make a frozen canvas to paint on
- Freeze small toys inside a huge ice block and invite your kids to hack away and set them all free!

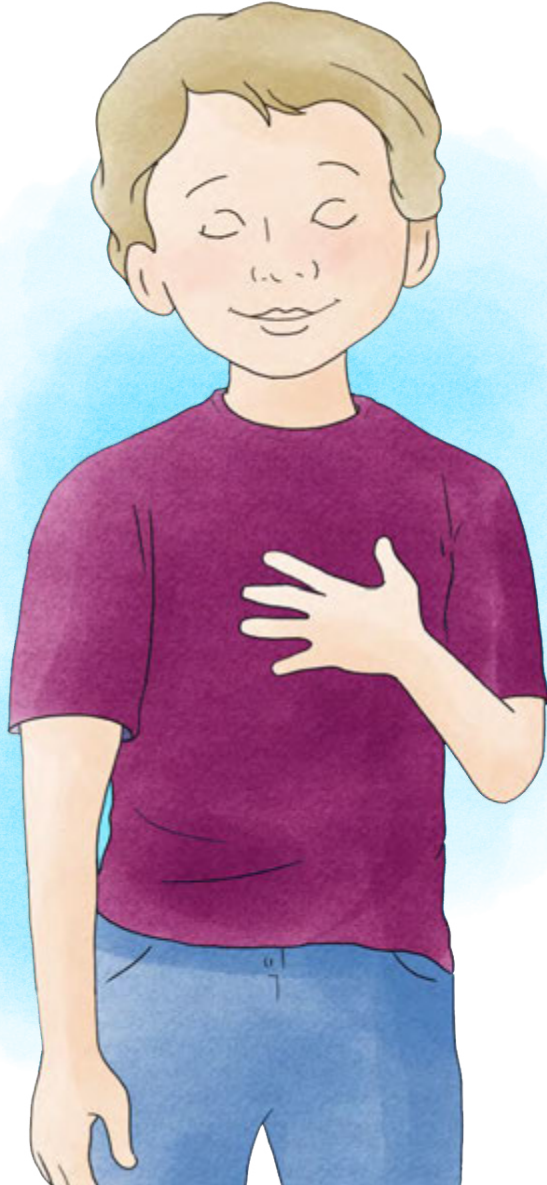


*By Cathy James*

*Nuture Store*

# APPENDIX

## PAUSE BREATH POSTER



# Pause Breath



**KIDS YOGA STORIES**  
Learn, Be Active, *and* Have Fun

### How to Practice Pause Breath

Stop what you're doing and take a moment to pause. Place a hand on your chest, close your eyes if that's comfortable, and take a few deep breaths. Feel the rise and fall of your hand on your chest. Do this deep belly breathing for a minute to help slow down your mind and body.

# APPENDIX

## TANTRUMS VS. SENSORY MELTDOWN CARDS

### TANTRUM VS SENSORY MELTDOWN

With a tantrum, the child is looking for a reaction whereas with a meltdown, the child does not care if you are reacting or watching.

With a tantrum, a child is trying to communicate to you that they want something. But with a meltdown, a child has simply reached a point where they have lost control.

With a tantrum, a child is aware of their environment and personal safety. With a meltdown, a child has lost control and awareness.

With a tantrum, a child is very much in control of their behavior. With a meltdown, they simply are not.

With a tantrum, you can usually calm a child down. With a meltdown, you might not always be able to do this. Sometimes you just have to let their meltdown run its course.

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