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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
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University Health Board

NEURODEVELOPMENTAL TEAM






ACTIVITIES/STRATEGIES TO ASSIST IN THE REDUCTION OF AUDITORY SENSITIVITY (sensitivity to sounds)



The following are a list of activities and strategies that can be used to assist in reducing auditory sensitivity and to assist the child in attending in different environments. Be aware that a child who is over responsive to the auditory system may struggle to filter out background noise. They may also be more sensitive to sounds if they are anxious or in a heightened state.

- ✚ It helps to be aware of the child's sensitivity when introducing him/her to new or unfamiliar environments particularly if they are loud i.e. cinema, supermarkets, airports, high schools etc. It can help if you prepare him for this experience by gradually introducing him to the environment and allowing him time to get used to the noise. The more familiar and safe the environment feels to the child the better they will be able to cope with their auditory sensitivity.
- ✚ Wearing ear muffs, headphones, or a tight hat pulled down over the ears can help to dampen down noise and to increase tolerance to noisy environments. Wearing noise cancelling headphones in busy environments can help with filtering out back ground noises.
- ✚ Allowing the child to have some control or understanding over the noise i.e. showing him the Hoover, washing machine, fan etc (or other item that he is sensitive to) show him how it works, allow him to switch it off and on and gradually build up tolerance.
- ✚ Be aware of your tone and pitch of your voice. Whenever possible speak to the child in a calm soothing voice. Be particularly aware of not raising your voice particularly if the child is already distressed as this will only contribute to the chaos going on inside their heads.
- ✚ If the child is very distressed they may not be able to process what you are saying and it can sometimes help to write down or show a picture to indicate what you want them to do.
- ✚ Allowing the child opportunities to escape from areas he finds noisy and distressing. Removing the child from the environment can break the pattern and allow them time to calm before returning. Whenever possible build up tolerance to new environments before removing the child but be aware of levels of distress and remove them if at all possible before the behaviour spirals out of control.
- ✚ Whenever possible provide a quiet area removed from the classroom or other noisy home environment for the child to go to calm down. This could be a curtained area/large box, side room, den etc. The use of a couple of bean bags or cushions, soft lighting and soothing music can aid the child to calm. Give the child a certain measurable time in this environment before encouraging them to return to class or activity.
- ✚ Playing quite calm music such as Mozart can help to soothe and build up tolerance to auditory input and to calm if distressed. Using headphones with soothing familiar music may also

assist the child in coping with noisy unfamiliar environments or transitions from one environment to another.

-  Giving clear concise instructions in a calm soothing voice can assist the child to block out background noise and to focus on what is being said. Encouraging them to look at you or in your direction when you speak and asking them to repeat what you have said can also help them to attend to your request.
-  Try to avoid over complex sentences and whenever possible link the conversation to what is happening now as the child may not always understand the concept of time and may be confused by what is said.
-  Try not to give too many instructions at once, break down the activity to make it less complicated.
-  Reduce background noise whenever possible i.e. turn off the TV, radio, mobile phone etc. when talking to the child.
-  Whenever possible provide a quite calm environment. Playing quite calm music to cover a particularly noisy period in the classroom i.e. when adjusting desks for lessons or when moving from one activity to another. This can help people to remain calm and keep noise levels down. Lifting furniture instead of dragging it can also help as can a carpeted surface in a classroom.