

# SENSORY INTEGRATION LEAFLETS FOR PARENTS

## Understanding Sensory Integration

### Supporting Your Child's Development

#### What is Sensory Integration?

Sensory integration is the brain's ability to organize and make sense of information from the senses. It helps children respond appropriately to the world around them—whether it's balancing on a swing, listening to instructions, or eating a new food.

When sensory integration is working well, children are calm, attentive, coordinated, and able to learn new skills. But for some children, this process is more difficult. They may become overwhelmed by sounds, avoid messy play, struggle with coordination, or have trouble sitting still and focusing. These challenges can impact daily life, from getting dressed to participating in school and social activities.

#### Why Sensory Integration Matters for Skill Development

Sensory integration lays the foundation for many important skills, including:

- Gross and fine motor skills (e.g., jumping, handwriting)
- Self-regulation (e.g., managing emotions, attention)
- Body awareness and balance
- Feeding and eating habits
- Social interaction and play

Supporting a child's sensory needs helps them feel more comfortable in their body and surroundings, making it easier to learn and participate in everyday tasks.

#### How Therapy Can Help

Occupational Therapists trained in Ayres Sensory Integration® (ASI) work with children in a play-based, sensory-rich environment. They use specialised equipment such as swings, balance beams, and tactile materials to help children explore and respond to sensory input in a way that promotes growth and learning. Therapy is tailored to each child's unique needs and goals.

At the Sensory Integration Therapy Centre (SITC), we also involve parents in the process—offering strategies, home programs, and support to ensure your child's progress continues beyond the therapy room.

## What Parents Can Do at Home

- Observe your child: Notice what types of activities calm them or trigger strong reactions.
- Create routines: Predictability helps children feel safe and in control.
- Encourage movement and play: Climbing, jumping, swinging, and messy play help develop sensory and motor skills.
- Limit overwhelm: Provide quiet spaces and reduce sensory overload when needed.
- Work with professionals: Collaborate with therapists to understand your child's profile and tailor support strategies at home.

## Remember

Every child processes sensory information differently. With the right support, children can learn to manage their sensory world more effectively, building the skills they need to thrive at home, in school, and in life.

# Sensory Integration and Self-Regulation

## Helping Children Feel Calm, Focused, and in Control

### What is Self-Regulation?

Self-regulation is a child's ability to manage their emotions, behavior, and attention. It helps them stay calm when upset, focus during class, follow routines, and respond appropriately to different situations. For many children, developing these skills takes time—but for some, it's more challenging.

One of the biggest influences on self-regulation is how a child processes sensory information.

### The Link Between Sensory Integration and Regulation

Sensory integration is the brain's ability to organize and make sense of what we see, hear, feel, smell, taste, and how we move. When this process works well, it supports a child's ability to stay calm, alert, and engaged. When it doesn't, everyday things like noise, movement, or touch can feel overwhelming—or, on the opposite end, not stimulating enough.

This can lead to behaviours like:

- Meltdowns or shutdowns
- Avoiding certain textures or sounds
- Constant movement or restlessness
- Difficulty focusing or following instructions

These behaviours are not just “acting out” — they may be signs that a child is struggling to regulate their sensory world.

## How Sensory Integration Therapy Helps

Occupational Therapists trained in Ayres Sensory Integration® (ASI) create safe, playful environments where children can explore and respond to sensory input in a way that builds their regulation skills. Sessions are tailored according to each child's sensory needs and may include activities using swings, tunnels, textured materials, and movement games.

Over time, children become better able to:

- Tune in to what their body needs (e.g. movement, calm)
- Cope with challenging sensations
- Transition more easily between tasks
- Focus and stay emotionally balanced

## How Parents Can Support Regulation at Home

- Create calm routines: Predictable schedules reduce anxiety and help children feel in control.
- Use movement breaks: Jumping, stretching, or bouncing can help reset the body and brain.
- Set up a sensory corner: A cozy spot with cushions, fidget toys, or calming lights can be a safe retreat.
- Watch for sensory cues: Learn what triggers your child's dysregulation and what helps soothe them.
- Model calm: Your own calm presence helps your child feel safe and regulated.

## Every Child is Unique

No two children have the same sensory needs. Some may need more input to stay alert; others may need less to stay calm. Sensory integration therapy helps uncover your child's unique profile—and supports them in building the foundation for lifelong self-regulation.