

Sensory Play

A guide for Parents, Teachers, and other Carers.

Sensory Play

Sensory play means any activity that lets children **use and explore their senses** of touch, sight, sound, taste, smell, movement, and balance to understand and navigate their world in their unique way.

Importance of Sensory Play

For autistic children, sensory play is extremely important part of helping them calm their nervous system, focus, build new skills, and make learning fun.

- Helps them **regulate emotions** and reduce anxiety.
- Gives them a **safe way to explore** textures, sounds, and movement at their own pace.
- Can improve **motor skills, language, and social skills**.
- Provides a predictable and enjoyable activity when the world feels overwhelming.

Sensory Play Ideas:

Touch / Texture

- **Sensory bins** with rice, beans, pasta, water beads, or kinetic sand.
- Playdough, clay, or slime to squish and roll.
- A “feely box” — guess objects inside without looking.

Movement / Balance

- Mini-trampoline or bouncy ball.
- Swinging, rocking chairs, or gentle spinning toys.

Sound

- Shakers, drums, or a small xylophone.
- Listening to calming nature sounds or soft music with headphones.

Sight / Light

- Blowing bubbles for them to watch those float and try to pop.
- Glitter jars or lava lamps to watch.
- Sorting colorful pom-poms or blocks.

Smell

- Smelling jars with mild scents (vanilla, citrus, diverse flavours).

Taste

- Safe taste tests of different textures (smooth yogurt, crunchy crackers, spicy).

Deep Pressure

- Use of weighted blankets, cushions.
- “Heavy work” like pushing a laundry basket or crawling through a tunnel.

Tips for Success

- **Follow the child’s lead** — don’t force it.
- Start with **short sessions** and gradually build.
- Provide **choices** and allow breaks.
- Watch for signs of discomfort or overstimulation.
- Always supervise for safety.

Take-home message:

Sensory play doesn’t have to be fancy or expensive. Simple household items, done gently and predictably, can help autistic children explore their senses, feel calmer, and build important skills