

Sensory modulation practice checklist for staff



Orientation and planning for people accessing service.	Completed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform people accessing service about the sensory modulation approach. This needs to be done as part of someone's orientation following admission as part of their orientation to the service. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the different sensory modalities or tools available in the sensory room and cart. Do this when the person is not acutely distressed. • Demonstrate appropriate use of sensory modalities or tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ visual (sight) ▪ audio (hearing) ▪ olfactory (smell) ▪ gustatory (taste) ▪ tactile (deep and light touch, temperature, and pain) ▪ proprioceptive (movement in joints and muscles) ▪ vestibular (position and acceleration) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore people's experiences in using sensory modalities and help them to identify their sensory preferences. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What helps them to feel calm? ▪ What helps them to feel alert? ▪ Are any of the tools or strategies distressing or uncomfortable, or contraindicated due to health conditions (e.g., allergies, musculoskeletal issues)? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist people to identify and record preferred strategies. These can be captured in a sensory preferences assessment tool and added to the person's prevention and crisis, or safety plans. Contraindicated sensations should also be recorded. 	
Supporting de-escalation and self-management of arousal	Completed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify signs of agitation or distress in people as early as possible (see arousal level chart). Encourage people to identify their own early warning signs and seek assistance to use the sensory strategies early. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite people to use the sensory room or cart. Ask them which strategies or tools they think would help. Remind them of their safety or crisis plan, and which tools have been helpful in the past. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of potential safety issues for the people or staff involved. Follow ward guidelines for managing risk including communicating plan to use sensory room/strategies with other staff. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support people to use the sensory room or tools. Focus on building trust and a sense of safety by being a calming and grounding influence. Ask them what they would like you to do (e.g., sit quietly, use tools alongside them, talk through their distressing situation). Check in with people during and at the end of the session to ensure the strategies are helping and watch for signs of discomfort or escalation. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist people to reflect on their use of sensory tools to manage their own distress. Discuss what worked well and what was not so effective, and whether anything needs to be altered in their crisis or safety plan. Complete documentation as described below. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support people to use their sensory strategies to maintain a calm and alert state. Encourage use of strategies on a daily basis to maintain wellbeing and prevent crisis. This might involve identifying possible triggers, planning to use sensory strategies to avoid or reduce impact of stressful situations, developing an individualised sensory kit and building sensory strategies into everyday routines. 	
Documentation	Completed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fill in the relevant logbook for the sensory room or sensory cart. Include: Person's name, staff name and signature, date, start and finish time, feedback. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record people's experiences by using the self-rating tool. File the self-rating tool in people's medical record. This inform staff on how we support the people in using sensory based interventions. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update people's progress notes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> behaviour mental state time spent in using sensory room and/or sensory cart sensory modalities used pre-post approach ratings. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update people's safety and/or crisis plan if necessary. 	
Health and safety considerations	Completed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check people's precautions or contraindications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hypersensitivity to particular input (this may be trauma related) musculoskeletal issues allergies seizures respiratory ailments cardiac condition. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure hygiene is followed before and after use of sensory modalities. Use antibacterial wipes to clean items. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be mindful of people's level of arousal. Check in and watch for signs of escalation or discomfort regularly. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check sensory spaces and tools are in a tidy and working condition after use. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return and secure items after use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ return sensory items and cart to designated locations ▪ lock sensory room or cabinet (dependent on the unit policy and procedures). 	

Note. Sourced from "The Implementation and Impact of Sensory Modulation in Aotearoa New Zealand Adult Acute Mental Health Services: Two Organisational Case Studies: a thesis submitted in fulfilment of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand", by G. F. Azuela, 2019, Doctoral thesis, Auckland University of Technology.