



## What is sensory modulation?

- A therapeutic approach that focuses on using a person's senses (sight, sound, smell, touch and taste) to promote mental wellbeing and balance.
- Individuals react differently to different sensory experiences so an initial assessment focuses on which sensory experiences are useful for the person.
- Once the preferences of an individual are established, these can be used to promote wellness and balance, with some sensory experiences being activating and some calming.

## Who will benefit from using it?

- Sensory modulation is useful to a wide range of people. Te Pou o te Whakaaro Nui have focused initial training and resource development on its use with mental health service users in acute inpatient units. From this training, frontline staff report that they work with service users to use sensory modulation to promote wellbeing, prevent and reduce distress for some people and to support an increase in motivation and activity levels.
- From this initial training, a number of community based mental health services have also implemented sensory modulation techniques with a wide variety of people in a range of community based settings.
- Mental health service staff members, in learning about sensory modulation and seeing its effective use, are also increasingly using the techniques to promote their own wellbeing.

## How does it work?

- Staff trained in sensory modulation work with the service user to establish what sensory experiences are useful to them.
- A range of equipment and environments are used to provide sensory input including sensory rooms, music, lighting, essential oils, mirimiri (massage), weighted blankets, sour lollies and ice-blocks.
- Individuals will find sensory experiences that work well to either calm/soothe or activate/ motivate depending on their particular requirements.
- Once a person has established what works for them, these sensory experiences can be included in a plan that promotes recovery and wellbeing, specific to that person.
- Our senses are the way that we interact with the world and the effect of deliberately using them to support wellness is an often underestimated but very powerful therapeutic tool.
- We all use sensory modulation in our daily lives, without knowing it or thinking about it. For example, a person may use quiet instrumental music to assist with relaxation and sleep but they use 80's pop music

when working out on the step machine at the gym. Another current everyday example is the current popular activity of adult colouring in books.

## Where can I find more information?

- Visit the sensory modulation page on the Te Pou website <http://www.tepou.co.nz/initiatives/sensory-modulation/103> or go to the resource centre and search for sensory modulation <http://www.tepou.co.nz/resources>
- Ask at your local DHB Mental Health Service who is trained in the use of sensory modulation.