

# Occupational Therapy and ADHD

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# What is Occupational Therapy?

OT helps people to do the everyday things that they want to do and need to do.



# OT and ADHD



OT targets specific skills that are impacted by  
ADHD.

- Sustaining Attention
- Sensory Modulation
- Executive functioning

# Sensory Modulation

Our brains are constantly processing incoming sensory information and organising this information so we can respond in a way that allows us function in everyday life.



# Sensory Modulation and ADHD

- We all have different sensory modulation patterns that can impact on how we feel, think and behave.
- Sensory processing problems in children with ADHD are more common than children without ADHD (Ghanizadeh 2011)
- Can become overwhelmed and disorganised by too much or too little sensory stimuli (eg touch, sound, movement etc).

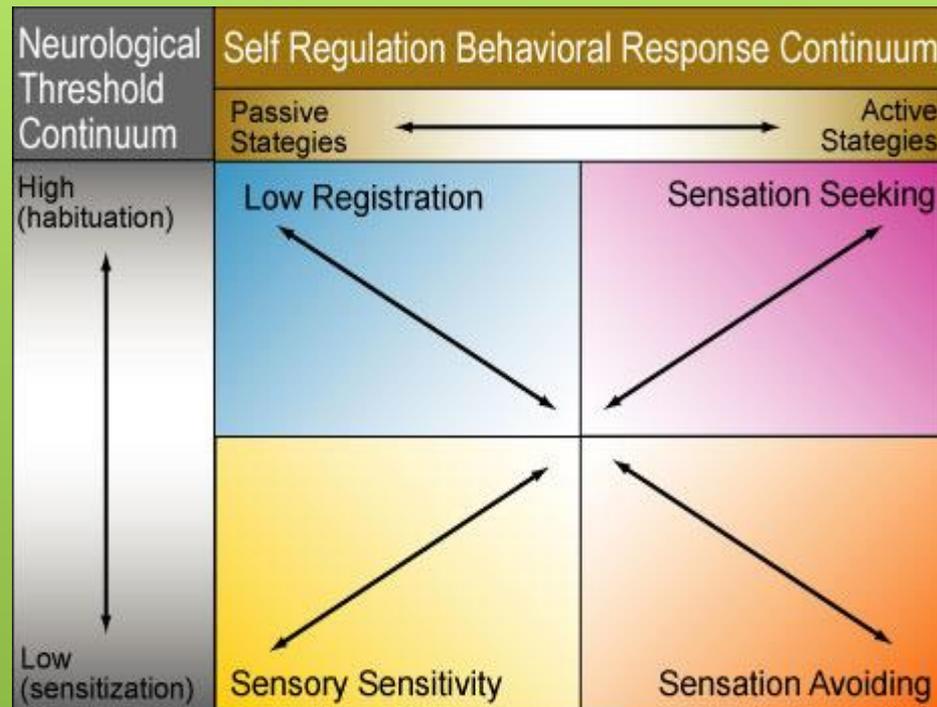
# Sensory modulation

Key to self regulation.

3 levels of response to sensory stimulation:

<b>Under responsive</b>	<b>Over responsive</b>	<b>Just right</b>
Need more stimulation to feel alert, grounded and pay attention.	Feel overwhelmed or overloaded by sensory stimulation.	Feel grounded, calm and able to engage.
	 	

# SENSORY PATTERNS



- **Sensation Seeking** is the combination of high neurological thresholds and an active self regulation strategy.
- **Low Registration** is the combination of high neurological thresholds and a passive self regulation strategy.
- **Sensation Avoiding** is the combination of low neurological thresholds and an active self regulation strategy.
- **Sensory Sensitivity** is the combination of low neurological thresholds and a passive self regulation strategy.

## **Low registration/ Bystander...**

- Miss or take longer to respond to stimuli
- slow to understand a joke
- Don't notice strong smells– smoke
- Hit off things, trips & falls – unknown bruises
- ✓ Good at focusing in distracting environments
- ✓ High tolerance levels
- ✓ Very relaxed manner

## **Sensory avoidance/ Avoider...**

- Easily overwhelmed or bothered by stimuli
- May create rituals to reduce this
- ✓ Like predictable routine
- ✓ Good at being alone

## **Sensory Seeking/ Seeker...**

- May get easily bored or struggle in low stimulus environments
- Movement /-Music while working
- May fidget, be restless
- ✓ experimental and curious
- ✓ Quick and responsive/reactive
- ✓ multitask

## **Sensory sensitivity/ Sensor...**

- Notice everything!
- & Notice quickly
- Can get distracted and /or uncomfortable with intense stimuli/change
- ✓ Good ability to attend to detail
- ✓ Knows where everything belongs

# Senses...

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# Potential Sensory Strategies to help focus attention

- Dynamic sitting
- Wiggle on an in-seat concentration cushion
- Think of ways to learn material using movement or dance



# Potential Sensory Strategies to help focus attention

- ✓ Suck on lemon slices!
- ✓ Cold drinks
- ✓ drinks via a straw
- ✓ Anything citrus or sour tasting
- ✓ Chew! (eg gum or hard crunchy food, dried fruit)



# Potential Sensory Strategies to help focus attention

**Bubble wrap**



**Fidgets!**



**Blu - tac**



**Throwing/bouncing a ball**

# Potential Sensory Strategies to help focus attention



- ✓ movement breaks BEFORE and during work.
- ✓ Repetitive resistance based focused exercise
- ✓ Chair setups – wall press-ups –hand presses
- ✓ Jawning!
- ✓ Routine stretches throughout the day &/activity at hand
- ✓ Use balance board – also good for mindfulness practise
- ✓ Break larger tasks into smaller steps. After each step, stretch!

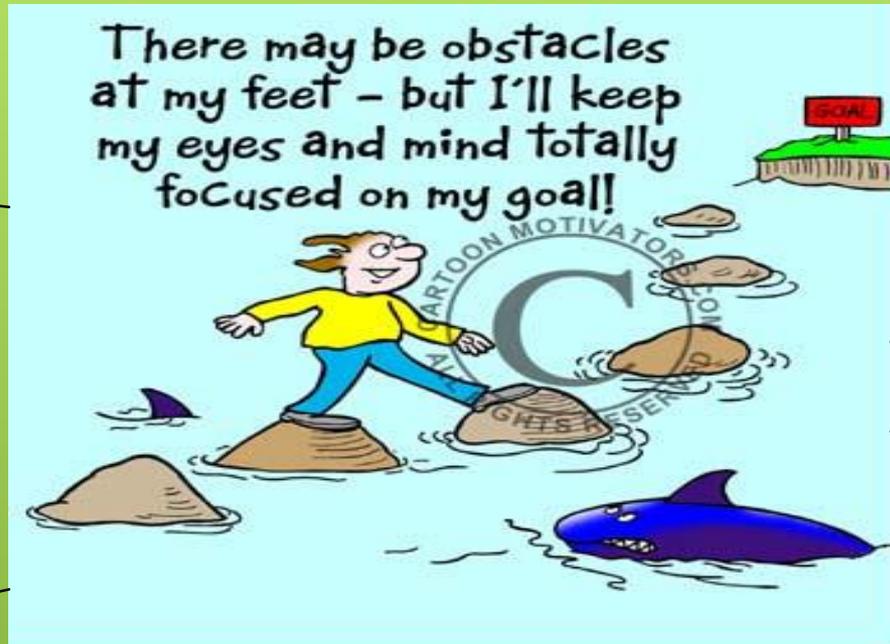
# Potential Sensory Strategies to help focus attention

- Room diffusers
- Background music
- White noise
- Mood lighting
- Light boxes
- Weighted blanket
- Vibrating cushions
- Tapping
- Random alarms
- Soundproofing boards/plugs

# Organise to Get Organised!

**College life & college environment**

**Leisure life & Leisure environment**



**Home life & home environment**

**Work life & work environment**

**Personal life and personal environments**

# HEALTHY ROUTINES & TAKE A BREAK SIGNALS



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# Skills training &/ use of

## props...

### Timers, Apps, Diaries, Phones, etc

TOOL	USE
	<p><b>TIMER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staying focused on a given task</li><li>• Keeping track of time</li></ul>
	<p><b>CHECKLIST</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remembering a list of things</li><li>• Shopping list</li><li>• Packing for school/work</li></ul>
	<p><b>PHONE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alarm Clock</li><li>• Reminders</li><li>• <b>Particularly good tool because it tends to always be with you</b></li></ul>

# Environment



- Designated spot where all college/home based work is done
- Sensory awareness for social occasions/events to maximise the engagement & minimise personal disruption
- Dealing with environmental distractions
- Space
- Lighting
- Routines for 'clearing'

# ALWAYS STRENGTHS FOCUSED

- Fun!
- Creative.



- High energy!



- Initiator
- Idea - Generator

# OT Service Timeline...

## Pre-2014

- adhoc, individual interventions based on individual clinicians experience and expertise
- Core OT skills training & mindfulness (Dual Qualified)

## ➤ 2014 MDT Working Group established

Reviewed literature in area, CADDRE and NICE guidelines, linked with OT colleagues with experience of ADHD in the areas of CAMHS, Unilink services and adult mental health and OTs working privately in the field

## ➤ Mid -September 2015

Dr. Tina Champagne Phd - delivered OT specific Sensory Modulation Training & MDT Introduction

## ➤ October 2015

ADHD public lecture in collaboration with HADD Ireland

Flood of referrals - Inpatients & Outpatients!

Sensory Modulation at both ward and department level for both group and individuals rolled out

Outpatient OT ADHD service plan created

## ➤ 2016 -

OT peer learning group set up in-house- creation of Sensory Room for Individual work, Recommendations made re: sensory spaces in wards – Active Sensory modulation inputs on Dementia Unit and acute admissions unit and Eating Disorder Program

Calming Through The Senses Group developed and evaluated

Mindfulness is used routinely with ADHD

# OT Services AT St John of God Hospital...

1. Individual OT assessment- MOHO
  2. Sensory profiling
  3. Asses for sensory patterns
  4. OT ADHD Functional Screening
  5. Interest exploration - channelling
  6. Career/vocational exploration
  7. Calming through the senses - Group
- ✓ Creation of individualised sensory diets
  - ✓ Education re: sensory patterns and impacts- ADLs, relationships, work, parenting, leisure
  - ✓ Environmental awareness & adaptation
  - ✓ Practical strategies for SC/L/P/S&R
  - ✓ Practical environmental strategies for Home /Work environments
  - ✓ Advice and development of healthy daily routines
  - ✓ Mindfulness training & practise
  - ✓ Exercise programs

# LEARNING TO CALM- A SENSORY APPROACH

DATE: 2016 NO. OF GROUPS- 3 AVG ATTENDANCE PER GROUP- 9

RESPONDANTS 25/28

1. Was the group useful to you?	<u>19 yes</u> 5 somewhat 1 no
2. Were you offered the opportunity to participate at your own level?	22 yes 3 somewhat
3. Would you recommend this group?	<u>23 yes</u> 1 possibly 1 no
4. Can you see yourself trying/continuing this at home?	<u>22 Yes</u> 3 no

## 5. The best thing about the group was

- Discovering the areas I'm overactive and underactive in
- Learning to recognise my degree of responsiveness to stimulation
- The information provided
- Trying out sensory items/trying out different sensory activities/the different sensory stations
- Exposure to stimuli/getting to experience sensory inputs
- Gaining more understanding of the senses and their impact
- It made sense of so much about things/behaviours I was doing

## 6. The least satisfactory thing about the group

- More time/less numbers

# Proposed Outpatient services...

## ✓ Level 1(1hour)

- Individual functional assessment & screening- Typical day
- Advice and practical strategies for improving daily functioning
- Introduction to Sensory Modulation
- Issue with relevant handouts
- Advise of websites, apps, blogs books etc as appropriate

## ✓ Level 2

- Further individual work – sensory profiling
- creating individualised sensory diet
- personalised skills training

### Peer groups –

1. 18yrs (school & College attendees)
2. Working population

## Level 3 - 1/2 Day Package , run quarterly

In conjunction with the individuals Medical / Psychological appointments...  
Workshops for ongoing support & upskilling

**ADHD &...mindfulness** –managing distractions- sleep-routine planning - goal setting – leisure exploration-change –holidays – technology

Optional individual 15 min session with OT am & pm to set and review goals

## Level 4 – Outreach

Information and /or training to employers / training facilities



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