



# Promoting Sensory Regulation in Autistic Visitors

# Overview

## Learning Objectives:

After reviewing this powerpoint, you should be able to

- Name the five basic senses
- Introduce the eight senses
- Define the power senses

# Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD)

- Having difficulty in registering sensory input such as sounds, smells, textures, lightings, and more → leads to anxiety and agitation
- Affects 1/20 people
- Many autistic individuals also have sensory processing challenges
- It's important to help people navigate situations in order to manage responses and reactions to sensory input

# 5 Basic Senses

1. Touch (tactile): largest in the body and has different types of touch receptors to let us feel differences between a light touch and a deep hug
2. Taste
3. Smell
4. Hearing
5. Vision

# 3 Additional Important Senses

1. Proprioception: uses **sensory receptors in joints, tendons, and muscles** to help us be aware of the position of parts of our body without looking at them
2. Vestibular: in our inner ears which provides our bodies with information about **movement and our relationship to gravity**
3. Interoception: tells us things about **how our body is feeling inside**, whether we are thirsty, in pain, tired, or hungry. It can impact on our **activity levels and feelings of well-being**
  - a. Autistic children often ignore interoception

# Power Senses

- The power senses include vestibular, proprioception, and touch systems
- Work together to provide a foundation for our behaviors and actions, such as being sensory defensive, having poor sensory modulation, poor sensory registration, or impaired sensory integration
- To promote a calm and organized environment, community venues should evoke the power senses by providing visitors opportunities for soothing back and forth head movement and deep pressure touch

# Strategies for Community Venues

- Offer a relaxed opening time
- Stress-free entrance and immediate orientation to the place
- Curtains on windows to minimize sound and dampen light
- Permanent or temporary sensory haven
- Offer a headphone zone

# Final Takeaways

- Our sensory world is a rich and complex thing.
- Adjusting our needs for sensory regulation by supporting internal resilience and tolerance while alerting people to potential challenges and giving them the power to come up with their own solutions can make a great difference in a visitor's staying power.



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