

SENSORY Minute

May 2017

How Can I Help Decrease Sensory Overload?

If you remember from last month, an easy way to remember how it feels to have sensory overload is to think of the acronym *TAPE*. The person, because of a sensory event, is in terror, annoyance, pain, or exhaustion. - John Taylor, Ph.D.

If you want to decrease sensory overload, it's best if you know the person well enough to be able to watch for clues of what they have sensory issues with or look at their *ReadyCard* to see what their *Ready Screen* or *Ready Approach* Assessment results were. If they have problems with smells, sounds, touch, or movement, you can take steps to help prevent sensory overload.

Case Example: Sally's *Ready Approach* Assessment showed that she has Sensory Modulation problems and tends to increase self-stimulation when it becomes noisy or when she is around a lot of people. Her self-stimulation becomes very intense and even becomes self-abusive at times. In the past, care providers have intervened by cuing her, with verbal and physical prompts, not to hit herself. This actually has increased intensity so the Care Team asked for assistance.

Recommendations included:

- Providing Sally with an environment rich in sensory power sensations – encouraging her to copy caregivers instead of the caregiver providing hand's-on techniques.
- Providing a quiet area for her at her workplace as well as in her home.
- Increasing power sensations, especially the single point swing, before stressful events.
- Using more picture schedules and ways to communicate with her vs. using verbal communication.
- Providing her more choices of activities and events that she attends.

Outcome: These suggestions were implemented by her caregivers, which significantly decreased her self-stimulation and self-abuse. The diligent assistance of her caregivers to recognize what triggers sensory overload and implementing a strategy throughout her day made all the difference in the world for Sally. Stay tuned for next month's Sensory Minute when we discuss the specific steps to prevent overload. If you can't wait, please visit <http://www.wikihow.com/Reduce-Sensory-Overload> for more information.

