SENSORY solutions™

a guide to effective REGULATION SPACES

Beyond Coloring Pages and Fidget Fads

I hope every district, every school has the resources to employ a highly skilled occupational therapist (OT) who has a deep understanding of sensory processing. Ideally, this person would advise leaders about setting up sensory-friendly spaces and provide input and insights for the team related to your most dysregulated students.

Unfortunately, there is a shortage of OTs for outpatient therapy, let alone all the other places they are needed. To help bridge this gap, let's talk about cozy corners, calming centers, zen zones, sensory rooms, and the wide world of spaces intended for increasing self-regulation.

Whatever you call it at your school, I have seen more and more of these regulation spaces popping up. As with all new things, there have been some bumps along the way to implementation. This guide is designed to help you harness the power of a healthy space designed for getting the "think before acting" part of the brain back in charge.

First, let's go over a few do's and don'ts that will set you and your students up for success.



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Do's & Don'ts of Regulation Spaces

Inspired by *Building a Trauma-Informed Restorative School* (Brummer, 2021)

Do	Do Not
Introduce the space positively and normalize needing time and space to get regulated.	Send students to the space as a punishment.
Model using it yourself.	Tease or shame anyone for using the space.
Teach students how to go to the space, choose a tool or strategy, reflect, and return to class.	Expect students to know how to use the space well without lots of practice.
Practice, practice, practice.	

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By Jessica Sinarski

Do

Have clear visuals and easy-to-access calming options.

Do

Provide options for movement and proprioceptive input.

Do

Create some privacy with a pretty shower curtain or decorative screen.

Do

Provide structure and set reasonable limits with a visual timer or sand in an hourglass.

Do Not

Make it over-stimulating.

Do Not

Rely exclusively on cognitive skills like self-reflection.

Do Not

Use it as a way to isolate the student.

Do Not

Use force or restrain a child in the space.

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Beyond Coloring Pages + Fidget Fads

I frequently get asked what sensory supports I recommend for a regulation space. As you may have guessed from the title of this section, it's not just fidget spinners and pop-its, which often turn into toys instead of tools.

Similarly, coloring can be helpful—I created some **mandalas** and **coloring pages** to help with self-reflection—but these items alone do not provide a comprehensive menu for feeding the sensory systems that might be in distress.

Suggested Sensory Supports

Try to include a few items from each of the following categories in your zen den, brain reset toolbox, or sensational sensory room.

1 Vestibular and Proprioception:

- Things to squish and squeeze (large and small)
- **Restore the Core printable activity cards**
- Other movement prompts
- Lycra sensory body sock
- Weighted lap pad or wrap
- Yoga ball
- Massage tools
- Sensory floor tile
- Bean bag chair or large cushion



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2 Touch / Tactile Sense



- Sensory adhesive strips and/or Velcro
- Sequin pillow
- Big, squishy stuffed animal
- Silicone sponge
- Something with various textures (search “DIY texture board”)

3 Sight



- Eye cover
- Sunglasses
- Ooze timer
- Liquid bubbler
- Globe (surprisingly soothing!)
- Age-appropriate brain visual

4 Hearing

- Noise-canceling headphones
- Soothing music
- Rain stick



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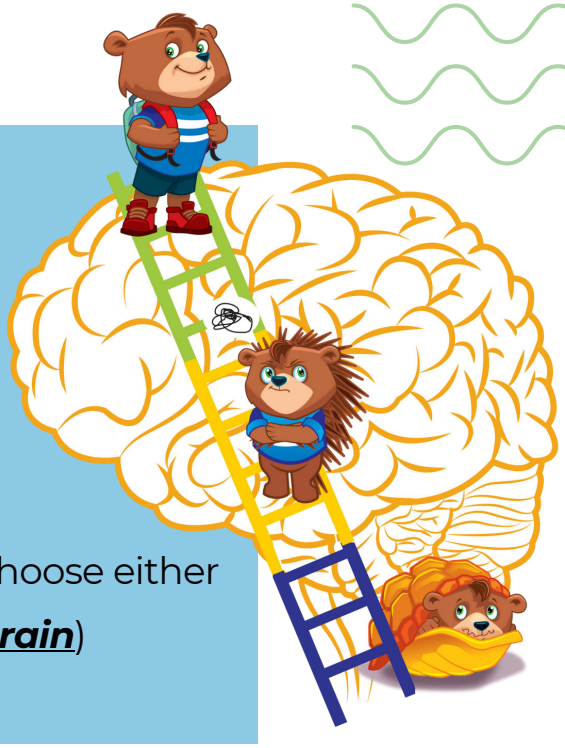
5 Taste and Smell
(+ some interoception and prope)

- Sugar-free bubble gum
- Hard mint candies
- Crunchy snacks
- Thin straw to use with a cup of water
- Coloring sheets with scented markers
- Vanilla, lavender, or orange essential oil dropped on a cotton ball in a glass jar



6 Interoception

- Pinwheels
- **Breathing Anchor Charts**
- Feelings Faces (Choose either **Riley the Brave** or ***Your Amazing Brain***)
- Feelin' & Dealin' reflection activity (Choose either **Riley the Brave** or ***Your Amazing Brain***)
- **Your Amazing ABC's Poster**



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Additional Considerations

Whether you are looking to supplement what you already have or are starting from scratch, the Sensory Solutions Toolkit™ is full of options to enhance your regulation spaces—from a few prompts on a lanyard, to tools for supporting the hidden senses, to posters and anchor charts that support long-term integration.

As you put these resources into use, remember that careful instruction, modeling, and practice will be needed for your students to build their self-regulation "muscles" over time.

Just have a lanyard?

Print the **Lanyard Cards** resource, which includes the following tools in the just-right size:

- My SOS Rescue Plan
- The ABCs Your Upstairs Brain Needs
- 4-7-8 Breathing
- Feeling Faces

Creating a sensory bin or binder?

Print full-size versions of the above resources, along with:

- **Anchor Chart for Regulation Spaces**
- **Countdown to Calm**
- Select **Riley the Brave** and/or **Mandala** Coloring Pages
- **Restore the Core Activity Cards**
- Copies of your preferred Feelin' and Dealin' reflection page (**Riley the Brave** or ***Your Amazing Brain***)

Outfitting a calming corner?

Print these anchor charts and put them on the walls for students to use regularly:

- **Anchor Chart for Regulation Spaces**
- **Breathing Anchor Charts**
- **Countdown to Calm**
- An age-appropriate Feeling Faces Anchor Chart (**Riley the Brave** or ***Your Amazing Brain***)

Also, be sure to have extra copies of Feelin' and Dealin' available so students can reflect at the end of their time in the calming corner, either **Riley the Brave** or ***Your Amazing Brain***.

TRY THIS...

When deciding what to include or emphasize in your regulation station, get students' input and pay attention to what helps them de-stress in difficult moments.

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