

Golden Nuggets

Occupational Therapist from Children's Therapy Services and York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust were asked for their 'Golden Nuggets' of advice for sensory processing differences.

Auditory – Golden Nuggets

- 👂 Use of noise cancelling headphones / ear plugs.
- 👂 Try headbands, music played through earphones where appropriate.
- 👂 **School dining area-** For a child that does not like the noise level in the dining room ask if they can eat in a different area or allow them to enter the area first to allow noise to build around
- 👂 **Hand dryers-** If your child does not like hand dryers in public toilets – try and use the single accessible toilet, taking a flannel for drying hands.
- 👂 Try and explore noise with the use of things such as hats, caps, hoods, ear warmers, ear defenders to reduce the level of the noise.
- 👂 Access to a protected quiet space especially after exposure to a noisy session.
- 👂 Pre warning about known noises.
- 👂 Try visual prompts in the classroom to help manage the noise level. For example, use of traffic light system.



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Proprioceptive – Golden Nuggets

- 👤 Try visual prompts in the classroom to help manage the noise level. For example, use of traffic light system.
- 👤 Use calming techniques when stressed by unexpected noises – breathing exercises or deep pressure exercises might help to regulate.
- 👤 Supporting a child or young person to develop appropriate behaviour when upset by noise for example moving away or asking someone to speak more quietly.

👤 Oral seeking

- **Suck** a sugar free lolly or mint, drink through thin straw.
- **Blow** bubbles into water, paint through a straw.
- **Chew** cereal bars, chewing gum, chew buddy
- **Crunch** frozen fruits in ice, raw veg

👤 Movement seeking

- Pushing, pulling, stretching, squeezing and taking own body weight against gravity.
- Theraband
- Ripping up paper / cardboard
- Crab walking
- Wobble cushion



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Vestibular/movement – Golden Nuggets

Chair based activities –

- hand pushes, chair pushups,
- squeezing stress ball,
- theraband on the chair.

Weight bearing activities

- crawling
- push-ups



Resistance activities

- pushing, pulling, squeezing

Cardiovascular activities

- Running
- jumping

Deep pressure –

-  tight hugs
-  deep pressure to the shoulder, squash and squeeze down arms and legs

Use of –

- Swing
- Hammock
- Rocking/ bouncing on the peanut ball
- Trampoline
- Regular movement breaks





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Vestibular/movement – Golden Nuggets


Chair based activities –

- hand pushes,
- chair pushups,
- squeezing stress ball,
- theraband on the chair,
- move n sit cushion

 **For long car journeys** – having a soft ball in the footwell of the car can be helpful for those who find it hard to sit still (as long as they are aware it must never be moved / thrown – you would need to risk assess this yourself) encourage them to squash the ball with their feet, roll the ball with feet, pat the ball rather than the back of the drivers seat.

 Use of a ‘move n sit’ cushion – cushions are lightly inflated meaning that when they move the surface that they are sitting on also moves. They can use this under their bottom or feet

 **Fidget toys / therapy try or playdoh** – something they can safely play with if they need to be moving their hands.

 Allocate the child or young person responsibilities which allow movement during the day such a collecting in the homework or taking messages to the office.



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General school – Golden Nuggets

Environment

- Warn teachers if the child is sensitive to visual stimuli so they can make reasonable adjustments e.g. Colour and lights.
- Consider preferred positioning of seat in classroom e.g. Near window/front and who they're sat near for familiarity

Extra provisions

- Introduce movement pass for supervised stretch breaks.
- Ensure they have a safe place they can go if needed.
- If available have a key worker, they can speak to who they are comfortable around.
- If white paper is difficult to look at, try using coloured overlays/ coloured paper
- Have flexible seating Find a chair that is comfortable .
- Perhaps have a pass to get in the dining room early and then be able to eat with a peer in a quieter environment.

Transitions

- Give time and warn the child about changes coming up in timetable so they can process this e.g. Fire drill.
- Let them be involved in the choice so they have feeling of control over the change.
- Have familiar smell on sleeve/collar, tie or object to hold to nose to enable the young person to transition through smells



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Interoception – Golden Nuggets

Under responsive to fullness or hunger

- Education around portion sizes and the types of food to eat within a day. Consider YouTube videos on daily nutrition.
- Checking in with another adult would be appropriate to support planning ahead meals.
- Consider storing foods in certain containers that already deliver a sensible portion and or use of sensible sized plates.
- Choosing snacks that come in individual packaging inside can also curb / encourage quantity consumed

Under registering temperature

- Embedding a weather forecast into the daily routine (e.g. asking Alexa or an app on a smartphone) to support autonomy for sensible dressing.
- Have certain drawers dedicated to clothes appropriate for colder days
- Getting warm can make the skin itch, monitor when your child is getting warm, encourage them to recognise this. Teach them strategies like removing jumper, using handheld fan or running hands under cool water
- Use a chart at the door and a weather forecast or thermometer to provide the science – there are some example charts on our webpage



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Tactile – Golden Nuggets

👉 Under registering pain / discomfort

- Proximal adults and peers to be educated and aware of this and encourage the child to check themselves if involved in any kind of incident.
- Participating in activities that boost the proprioceptive system and wake up our body awareness, and any activities that get the heart beating faster can only have a positive impact on our overall attendance to our bodies and how they are feeling. This can be achieved through activities working against resistance

👉 For the child that is fearful of unforeseen touch – spread the word amongst your family and friends and other people within their life. Just to know that others around you know how you feel can reduce anxiety and to know that those around you understand and try not to do that which you do not like means that the child does not always have to worry about this.

👉 If your child does not like the feel of the wind on their face – explore different neck warmers, hoods, hats and caps and also try a clear umbrella that they could go under

👉 Try seam free clothing such as seam free pants, vests, socks. Remove labels, wear socks inside out

👉 Encourage the child or young person to choose their 'safe clothes' that they use on days where they are not able to tolerate the clothes expected of them



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Tactile – Golden Nuggets

- 👉 Apply deep pressure touch before putting clothes on. Use a quick foot massage for example to make the skin ready
- 👉 Wear sports base-layer under clothing
- 👉 Approach and touch the child from the front so it is not a surprise where possible. Use firm pressure when making contact as opposed to light, alerting touch.
- 👉 **Seeking deep pressure**
 - Use of a compression sheet or sleeping bag to give deep pressure feedback through the night promoting calmness and allow the child to wake regulated
 - Use of weighted soft toys on the knees
- 👉 Wash clothes before they are worn with lots of fabric softener.
- 👉 If your child does not like certain textures let them try clothing before you buy – let them touch and explore the material first.

Scan the QR Code to watch our series of videos to show some of these activities and help with understanding a child's sensory processing differences.



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