

MARC'S SENSORY OASIS

Sensory-based Occupational Therapy

www.otmarclandry.com

SENSORY SENSITIVE Goes to SCHOOL!!



CHILDREN ARE PRECIOUS!

SCHOOL IS OVERSTIMULATING!!!

Just thinking about it is stressful!

MY WORKSHOP!!

October 19, 2018 Vancouver Workshop

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/hey-my-brain-doesnt-work-that-way-tickets-47645242202>

I will be in Vancouver for a very short time, and am looking forward to offering my signature workshop to people in the area who want to learn about brain differences, stress response, sensory processing, and sensory diet ideas in a clear, easy to understand workshop with a great handout.

Not a lot of kids get excited about getting back to school, unfortunately. For my grandson, going to a new school for a new year is exciting! A new location, a new classroom, a new teacher and new peers. New voices, new lights, new everything! I am very proud of him for having such a great attitude, and proud of my son and his wife for helping him to be

so safe and grounded that such novelty and challenge can be met with enthusiasm. But let's face it, the beginning of a new school year is extremely stressful for many children, especially those who are sensory sensitive. Too much novelty triggers a lot of stress for a sensitive child.

If the child does not feel safe at school,

this is magnified a hundred fold. Everything new is bursting full of potential, and a child with less than nurturing experiences will almost always see the dark side and expand novelty into a worst case scenario. No matter how positive and upbeat you are, the idea of back to school can be frightening and stressful. Entering a new classroom with

this mental state sets a child up for a tough time, so what can you do? Well, it is always best when a person knows what s/he is getting into. Your child should meet the teacher before the first day, and also scope out the classroom, playground, school yard, etc. The more familiarity there is, the less stressful the novelty is. Most teachers are in their classrooms the week

"And That's OK!"

before school starts, so it is still not too late for this. Many parents with sensory sensitive children make requests that specific peers be assigned to the same class, if this will not negatively impact the peer. Many teachers will go out of their way to support a nervous or anxious child, so don't be afraid to ask. You, as parents, should discuss and decide what is best for your child. You might consider making the first few days half-days, skipping the less structured afternoon. Having a shorter day that ends on a positive note can really help in the long run, though your teacher and your school may not like your ideas. No matter, you are the expert on your child, and you should do what you think is best. Be open and discuss this with your child, if this is appropriate. Many children feel more safe and grounded with a special item, a favorite stuffy, toy, or rock. It would be great to choose a few grounding objects over the summer, especially small ones that can be kept in a backpack or pocket. A security object is a good idea, so don't let a teacher's opinion or 'school policy' get in the way if this is part of your plan.

The school environment, by nature, is one of the more

stimulating environments imaginable. It'll be a bit visually overstimulating with bright lights, snazzy bulletin boards, furniture and "stuff" everywhere you look, some familiar and some not. Many kids handle such environments better wearing a hat with a brim. Some teachers will be willing to leave the lights off, or partly off, for the first few days if you explain your child's sensitivities. If your young learner sits near the front of the class it is less distracting, and it is a good idea to be away from doors and windows. Again, anything you do to make the new environment more predictable will help.

Some kids are more easily frazzled when there is a lot of noise around him/her, and you might have some tips for this as well. Learners with auditory sensitivities might do best off to one side of the classroom, perhaps in the last row before the wall. This gives at least one side that is relatively quiet. A sound sensitive child should be able to know what the bells sound like and what the fire alarm sound like before they occur unexpectedly. If this can not happen, then it is at least best to talk about it and what it might be like, as well as how recoverable the surprise is. Maybe you can compare it to something you've experienced.

ADULTS WERE INVENTED TO KEEP
KIDS SAFE!

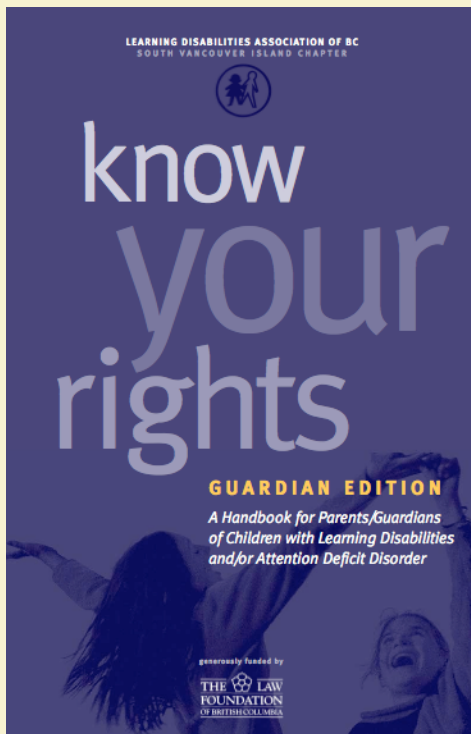
Safe House!

Create Sensory environments that support your child feeling safe and grounded. Do not force the child to advocate for himself or herself if not ready. Do not offer too much language based advice, as it is stressful to process and may conjure up images that you would rather not. Follow your child's lead; if he needs to talk, honor it, if she needs more physical activity, honor that. Be there and make sure the child knows that they count and that you are there for them. Parenting these kids can be challenging, even in a good school district. You may need to take time off of work, you may need to meet with school personnel more than you would like. When this happens, it is best to bring another parent, retired teacher, friend, advocate.

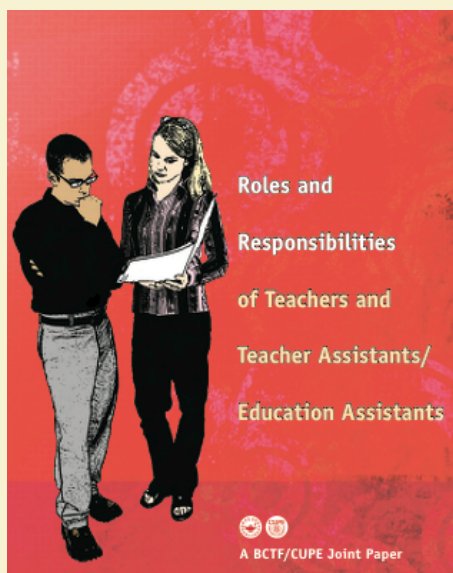
Focus on your child and what your child needs in order to benefit from education. Stay positive, trying to believe and portray that the school wants to do what is right for your child, they just don't quite get it yet. Look for allies. There are more sensitive kids all around us, and you can connect and learn from other parents' experiences.

Read Up!

www.knowyourrights.ca



<http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Issues/InclusiveEd/RolesAndResponsibilitiesTeachersTAs.pdf>



Parents are the most important members of the educational team, aside from the learner!

Some children (and adults) are sensitive to tactile input, including scratchy seams and tags. Never mind trying to make an impression; these guys should wear their most comfortable clothes possible. If the child has the misfortune of changing sizes and having all new clothes, not breaking them in can often be the last straw. Maybe you can get rid of some tags and pre-soak the new clothes in unscented softener before the first day. Some parents even have the child wear the clothes for a few hours at a time (without getting them too dirty) so they are a little more broken in and smell familiar on the first day. Comfort is the most important thing here. And speaking of the tactile system, does your child have a favorite little thing that can be held, squeezed, touched, or rubbed? In my day this was often a rabbit's foot. Fortunately that fad is over, though it was very soft, smooth, and soothing. It could be a little bit of "blanky", a rock, a coin, a shark's tooth, or any small item that feels safe and grounding. It might be wise to communicate that your child is anxious/sensitive and that it is a "security item". It would be more distressing if it was taken away as a "toy".

kit, this is the last place where junior needs a surprise!

Whether you cut the day short or not during the first while, give your child a chance to blow off some steam at the end of the school day. If it's OK with the child, stay at the school playground for a bit and allow some energy to get burned off. If that's not OK, stop at a neighborhood park or have some activities ready to go at home. If junior does not want to play, then come up with some 5 minute tasks that you need help with. Tasks that require a lot of energy or heavy work are best. Examples could be: carrying a box or bag in from the car, dragging laundry across the house, carrying a bag of potatoes or a bag of non-glass groceries, helping to move some furniture, banging some nails, or dragging supplies across the floor. During this time, don't talk, just let the energy be dissipated. After this, have a nutritious snack available, and give the person some down time to do whatever s/he chooses. You can find time to talk about it later, if you need to, but realize that the transitions between home and school create stress, and this goes both ways.

What is **most** important for a parent of a sensitive child is that you exude calmness, acceptance, and the appearance of being in control. When you hear/see

Let your child be part of planning what is in the lunch

something that upsets you, do not respond immediately. Only respond when you can be calm, adult, in control. Portray a positive outlook, but make it clear that you will deal with anything that needs to be.

When a sensory sensitive child feels safe and protected, things start to be handled better. With a good understanding of the child's sensory processing, good communication and assertive parenting, you can help to pave the way for a smooth year. Use the "What Works" form to help the school to understand the child.

There will be years where your child and his/her teacher will be a complete mismatch, and this is more common the less mature a teacher is. There are a lot of things you can learn by having a bad teacher, and we can discuss that in the future too. But for now, understand that you, the parents, need to be involved.



Have a Sensory Retreat!! These can often include lots of sensory stuff that may surprise you!! Gove the child control to decide what goes in. It's beauty is that it feels safe and this allows it to be as busy as the child wants.