

A17 - Using my sense of sound

Everyone has a different threshold to sensory input - some people are more responsive to noise and react in a more sensitive way. They may appear moody, irritable, be overactive, lash out at others (generally those who are noisy and close by) or they may withdraw from the noise, hold their hands over their ears or poke their fingers in their ears and become tearful.

They will tend to avoid noisy and busy areas such as outdoor, lunch or hall environments or free play sessions. This may result in the child excluding themselves with anticipation that they may be affected by the noise or they may neglect to use their hands in play or movement exploration, as they are busy covering their ears. They may avoid climbing or other activities that require in-hand grasps, which will significantly impact on a child's functional hand skill development.

They may prefer to move independently around the outskirts of the room, hide under tables or behind screens or prefer to remain in the reading corner, or be outdoors when others aren't.

Self-care may be affected with avoidance to attend at group toilet time, due to the increased noise and bustle (hand dryers) or poor use of cutlery and tendency to eat quickly to finish faster.

Additional adult support will be needed to help with grading up tolerance and acceptance of unfamiliar or new activities for sensory skill development, to integrate learning new concepts amid **smaller group work** and in a **controlled space** (reduced sounds and busy people traffic areas or places with 'humming' motors or air vents) to reduce distractions all possible.

Try reducing bright overhead lighting to reduce overwhelming visual senses.

Maintain consistency across sessions or activities and routines established by the child, for their own reassurance.

Activities

Introduce the activities at a graded level, within the child's individual level of tolerance and achievement.

Prior to or during structured activities, it will be beneficial to complete additional movement activities **combining calming vestibular (movement) and proprioceptive (firm compression) sensations**, to obtain a calmer or more responsive learning state such as:

- **soft play areas** with no additional sounds
- **den or pop up tent places** to give a feeling of security
- **jumping** independently on a trampette
- **soft rhythm or classic music** playing softly in the background
- **all activities that require a change in head positioning** (off upright to influence the sense of balance with movement receptors being close to the auditory system)

Monitor for any negative responses observed: such as certain types of movement resulting with further withdrawal – if so discontinue.

Expose the child to a wide range of sounds in graded challenges and tell them what to expect, to give them time to prepare themselves and actively explore.

Active participation and choice making, with turn taking will support building up tolerance to high or low frequency sounds (blow toy instruments or sound toys).

Add items to dampen down sounds such as; carpeting, padding and soft porous materials.

Explore vibration during play to distract and enhance sensations and sounds eg, add a vibration tool to sand tray and watch the visual movement.

Headphones with open systems that mask the sounds but don't block out all of the 'environmental noise'.

Frequency of use: Complete 10-15 minutes sessions every day or at least three times a week.