

KIOKO CENTER

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Quarterly Newsletter

Sensory Stories: A Holiday Helper

Joelle Seelenbrandt, OTR/L

Sensory Stories teach children with over-responsive sensory modulation to successfully engage in activities within the home, school, and community. These Sensory Stories instruct the child to use calming sensory strategies in order to deal with the unpleasant sensory aspects of a particular situation. When read on a regular basis, Sensory Stories assist the child in developing an effective routine that provides calming sensory input to help the child manage the sensory experiences surrounding typical daily activities. By using calming sensory strategies, such as doing self-imposed hugs, the child learns ways to successfully manage a situation and participate fully in the experience. The sensory strategies are designed to be used by the child so that he or she is equipped with the necessary tools to manage an unpleasant situation through the use of calming sensory input. Each story is custom-made by your child's therapist to meet his or her needs. Oftentimes, it is helpful to use actual pictures of your child in the difficult environment to help him or her easily relate to the story.

Sensory Stories which may be helpful around the Holidays include:

- School Assemblies
- Eating (for family dinners, especially with picky eaters)
 - Going to Parties
 - Going to a Store
- Going to Places of Worship
 - Riding in the Car
- Going to a Restaurant

See your therapist for more information on stories that would help your child in this busy Holiday season. Additional stories may be created, as decided upon by parent/guardian and your treating therapist.



Santa's "Sensational" Hints for Happier Holidays

Dr. Tara McCormick, OTD, OTR/L

Holidays can often bring about more stress. So here are some helpful hints to help make your holidays a lot happier for you and your little one(s)!!

- Keep your child's routines the same as much as possible; especially the bedtime and meal routines.
- Load up on healthy foods and plenty of water.
- Keep in mind when visiting unfamiliar or less familiar relatives, that the smells of other's homes, perfumes, colognes, foods, etc. can be very difficult for your child to handle.
- Keep in mind that a hug or a kiss from an aunt, uncle, cousin or grandma might be uncomfortable for your child; especially if someone has a beard, a scratchy sweater, or just applies too much pressure too fast.
- Explain to relatives or friends that your child has sensory sensitivities to help them be more aware of their own demeanor and environmental surroundings.
- Give your child plenty of built-in sensory breaks throughout the day or holidays to ensure a well regulated child.
- Allow your child to "take a break" from the busy setting throughout the day(s) if you are in an unfamiliar or less familiar place.
- Remember your child is cute regardless of his or her outfit; don't force a dress or sweater, suit or tie on your child if it is just going to create stress and tears. (Remember your brushing and joint compressions as well).
- Give yourself and child plenty of time to travel and get ready. Time pressures only add to more stress.
- Ask your therapist to help you write a sensory story for those holiday parties/events.



Healthy Habits for Happy Holidays

Jessica Kenney, OTR/L



BAD FOOD = BAD MOOD

The holidays are a time to be happy, a time to celebrate and enjoy being with the people we love. For some of our kids, the holidays can be exciting, but can also be STRESSFULL! The holidays bring lots of changes into a child's life. It is a time of transition and can cause your children to become overwhelmed. Busy crowds and noisy shopping centers; longer waits in store lines; expectations for gifts; new foods; visiting others; bright lights and décor; and school vacations leading to more unstructured time at home; can all cause your child to become overwhelmed and dis-regulated. What they need at this time more than anything is structure, routine, tradition, and a healthy body. Making sure you and your child are eating right and getting an adequate amount of activity during the holiday season will ensure that you and your family have a happy and healthy holiday season.

De-bunk the “junk” and look for healthier food options to ensure your children are not being poisoned by processed foods this holiday season. BEWARE because the culprits come out particularly at this time of year!

WHAT TO AVOID:

Anything processed, which includes anything that comes packaged. Food colorings, dyes, hydrogenated oils, and corn syrups all reek havoc on anyone's body. These chemicals are toxic and can cause many adverse reactions. Here are some to name a few: poor digestion, stress, mood fluctuations, anger outbursts, poor attention, irritability, poor sleep, poor self-regulation, heightened sensory reactivity, and increased immune reactivity.

HOW TO AVOID THEM:

- Drink lots of water. Cut out juices and soda completely from your child's diet. These are loaded with chemicals that cause low concentration, depressed mood, irritability, asthma, and/or hyperactivity. Water will help with digesting those extra holiday foods that you may be enjoying. Juices are just empty calories full of sugar and have NO nutritional benefit. Swap juices for the real thing! If you are having trouble weaning your children off of juice then start by diluting it with a ¼ cup water, then ½ and ½, then ¾ and so forth.
- Give your children a big balanced breakfast. Breakfast should include some form of protein, fruit, and a complex carbohydrate or veggies. Think of making: a Mexican egg white omelet with peppers; an oatmeal pancake with egg whites and berries; whole wheat toast with almond butter and apple slices; cottage cheese or Greek yogurt with fresh fruit and whole grain granola.
- Shop on the outer edges of the grocery store. Here you will find your fruits, vegetables, lean protein sources, and whole grains.
- Increase leafy greens and green vegetables in your child's diet- these have chlorophyll in them, which helps with food digestion and they are packed with nutrients. Sneak these guys into a “Green Monster” shake with ½ an avocado, 1 cup of frozen spinach or kale, ½ of a green apple, ½ a banana, ice, and low-fat milk or vanilla soy milk. You can also add Manuka honey or use a vanilla Greek yogurt to sweeten it up.
- I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas; NOT white refined carbohydrates. Get rid of white breads, pastas, crackers, etc, and swap them out for more complex carbohydrates that keep your kids more satisfied and more regulated. White, processed carbohydrates cause spikes and drops in insulin levels, fluctuating moods and stress cycles, particularly disruptive to children with sensory processing difficulties.
- Good Fats for Healthy Brains! Add good fats to your children's diet (i.e. avocados, nut-butters, olive oil, flax oils and ground flax seeds, Udo's oil, coconut oil, salmon and other fatty fish). Consider a daily Omega 3 supplement with DHA for your children (i.e. Coromega).
- Eliminate cheese. I cringe when people think they are giving their children “protein” by giving them cheese! Most cheeses are highly processed. Stick with soft cheese (i.e. feta, goat cheese, fresh mozzarella, cottage cheese, and Greek yogurts). These are not processed and though they don't have much nutritional value, they can add good flavor to some holiday favorites.

Healthy Habits for Happy Holidays con't

- Sugar and Spice and Everything Nice. Instead of indulging everyday in sugary sweets, flavor healthy foods with spices that remind you of the holiday season. Swap packaged chocolates and candy canes for a baked apple with cinnamon or a healthy hot cocoa recipe (i.e. use low fat milk, water, soy or rice milk; sweeten with 100% maple syrup, raw cane sugar, or Agave, and use 70%+ organic cocoa powder). Sneak added protein into your child's diet by using chocolate flavored protein powders (whey, hemp, rice, or soy). Limit sweets to small servings during special family gatherings versus all week long. Collaborate with family members to ensure you don't bring too much desert, which can lead to a lot of leftovers.
- Bake for a Good Cause. Don't want to miss out on the traditions of baking and decorating cakes, cupcakes, cookies, and brownies? Make them with your children, have a few, then teach your children the value of "giving to others" by donating them to your local food pantry (i.e. The Lazarus House in Lawrence, Ma).
- Get moving. Check out suggestions for Winter activities that help keep you active, energetic and healthy. Don't stress over parking a ½ a mile away from the mall entrance; consider this some extra movement therapy for you and your child.



Winter Wonderland Fun Joelle Seelenbrandt, OTR/L



Do you feel like the winter weather has got you stuck indoors? Below are some fun ideas to help your kids continue to get the movement and heavy work they need during these chilly months (along with other warming activities)!

Go sledding ... going down the hill provides calming movement, while pulling the sled back up the hill for another run gives the muscles heavy work.

Build a snowman/igloo ... packing snow into molds and stacking the heavy blocks/snowballs up high is great work for the muscles.

*Shovel a maze in the yard...*this will get in some heavy work, as well as creativity and motor planning. Invite neighborhood kids over to enjoy in the fun.

*Dress in layers...*tight-fitting layers will help the kids to stay warm, and will provide input and promote organization.

*Snowball bowling...*use snowballs to knock over blocks, or aim for targets.

*Make hot chocolate...*and drink it in the igloo you built! If outside is just too chilly, enjoy the hot chocolate in an *indoor fort*.

*Create a scavenger hunt...*make a list, with pictures or words, of objects that can be found outside in the winter months. Some suggestions are sticks, animal tracks, leaves, pine cones, etc. Giving kids specific tasks and items to look for helps keep them organized and on task.

And if staying inside is where your family wishes to be...

*Bake together...*allow the kids to mix the ingredients, especially the ones that are thick and hard to stir. Encourage kids to get messy in the process – it's part of the fun of learning!

*Make warm drinks...*and enjoy while listening to favorite songs or telling stories in front of the fire. Warm drinks help slow our engines down and keep us just right.

*Build an indoor fort...*where you can eat healthy snacks, have a picnic, or enjoy your favorite board game or book. Forts provide busy kids with a calm, quiet retreat.

Awakening in Africa

By Dr. Tara McCormick, OTD, OTR/L



My oldest son, Tristan and I have just returned from a trip to Africa in which we were blessed with the opportunity to volunteer at 6 orphanages. We were just 2 of 16 team members that ventured to Africa with All God's Children "Embrace Missions Program". Like many of the other volunteer trips we have completed, we were awakened once again. I think I can safely speak for many of our team members when I say that we received so much more from our experience than we could have possibly imagined. Our efforts to help these beautiful children and their caregivers pales in comparison to the life lessons they taught us in these few short days. These children and the staff at the orphanages have a true gift in seeing the positive in each and every situation. They do not take the simplest things in life for granted, nor do they take the people that come into their lives for granted. They live a simple life, uncluttered by media, excessive material possessions, time pressures, social status, etc. They are truly happy with the basic necessities of life and are forever taking time to help someone else out or simply taking the time to chat with another person or lend them a listening ear. They work very hard for everything and appreciate all they do have, which is not a whole lot. Many Africans still live without running water and have to walk to a stream to get their daily supply, only to return home to boil it for drinking and cleansing. Electricity is also sparse and therefore, the storage of basic foods is difficult. Even though this sounds so complicated, I believe it really makes them the people that they are: loving of nature, of life, of health; loving of people, and of animals; and so incredibly grateful.

Their schools are basic. A school room is often made of mud bricks and sometimes cement (in a wealthier area), a chalkboard, a stool for the teacher, and a few desks (3 children to each desk). You will not often see clocks, pencil sharpeners, or items hanging on the walls. It is the bare basics. Not all children can afford to go to school and so many do not get to attend unless they are sponsored by someone from a developing country or their parents can provide this luxury. The children that do get to attend are thankful for their opportunity and often look forward to each school day.

When reflecting on my trip several days after I returned, I realized that I was not only grateful for the experience but almost saddened by my return home. I immediately became overwhelmed by the pressures of society again and the amount of media, things, options, deadlines, etc. It dawned on me that although they have little, the simple life has so much more. As the saying goes, "Less is sometimes better." Don't get me wrong, I am thankful for my warm showers at the turn of a faucet, but as a mother of 5 and a business owner/manager, I find that the stress that we sometimes burden ourselves with as parents can be extremely overwhelming. It can be simple, if we choose for it to be that way. I leave you with a few questions to ask yourself if you are feeling the stress of everyday life and the pressures of raising a family: Is replying to all those emails about the holiday party for my 2nd grader really all that important? Do I need to decorate their food before they can eat it or should I just feed them what is appropriate and be happy with that? Does my child(ren) need to be in an activity every day of the week? Do they have to do three hours of homework every night to get straight A's, or is it sometimes okay to just have family game night? Do I have to volunteer for every event that my child(ren) participates in, or is it okay to volunteer for one important event a year? Does it really matter what other people think about me as a parent, or does it matter what my own children think? They love me and that is all that really counts!!!

At the Home of Hope in Kigali (one of Mother Teresa's orphanages) a statue of Mother Teresa stood at the entrance with one of her famous quotes that read: "Make of your life something beautiful for God."

Parents that read this, please remember you have already made something beautiful of your life and that is your child(ren). God bless you all and know that you are good parents.

Peace and Love,
Tara



Don't Forget...

- Kioko Center offers home consultation services to help you design and set up a sensory play space for your child or just help out with designing a sensory diet exercise program/routine. Set up an appointment with your therapist or call Jessica at 978-681-6605.
- Kioko Center also offers school consultations and can attend school meetings/IEP meetings as well.

Social Skills Group

Social Skills groups will begin January 12 through March 10, 2011. The group will foster development of social skills and social confidence in a "safe", supportive environment. Children with challenges regulating arousal levels in a group setting, and with challenges using appropriate social skills (i.e. initiating play with peers, turn-taking, sharing, waiting, following directions, cooperative play) are appropriate for this group. Call the office to get your child in today. Groups will run from 4 to 5 p.m. on Wednesday and 4 to 5 p.m. on Thursday.

Free OT Screens

When: January 22, 2011

Time: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. 15-20 minute screening with therapist

Where: Kioko Center, 820 Turnpike Street, Suite 104, North Andover, MA

What: Screens will be completed by licensed occupational therapists and will provide you with information to whether further occupational therapy testing and services are recommended for your child.

If services are recommended, other verbal suggestions will be made regarding your concern areas.

Wanted...

Kioko Center is currently looking for a part time or full time Speech Therapist. Contact Tara or Jessica H. at 978-681-6605 or tara@kiokocenter.com



Did You Know?



Tara McCormick, OTD, OTR/L and Jessica Kenney, OTR/L, along with their spouses John McCormick and Sean Kenney, have recently established a 501© non-profit organization called "GOT Orphans", which stands for Global Occupational Therapy for Orphans. This non-profit organization was established after returning from our trip to Mexico last year. The mission of our joint venture is to provide occupational therapy services to orphaned children with physical, emotional, mental, social, and learning disabilities or difficulties. We will be working with orphanages around the globe to not only provide therapy assessments and treatment plans for these children, but also collaborate with the staff of each of these orphanages to offer ongoing consultation, education, and training to their staff and caregivers. With each trip, we hope to have the funds and physical means to construct therapy rooms or centers in each of these settings. We look forward to and appreciate your support in prayer, volunteering opportunities, and joining us in our fundraising events. For anyone interested in supporting GOT Orphans either financially or through volunteer opportunities, please contact us at the Kioko Center.

2011 Kioko Center Seminars

- **January 20th: Sensory Integration Overview**
- **February 17th: Sensory diets in the home and community**
- **March 17th: The importance of sleep, activity, nutrition and environment**
- **April 14th: Nutrition 101**
- **May 19th: Alert Program for Self Regulation**
- **June 16th: What is Listening Therapy and how do I know if my child is appropriate for this type of therapy?**

All scheduled seminars are free to parents and the general public.

Please call to pre-register 10 days prior to the seminar date.

There is a \$5 cost for any requested handouts or printed materials.