

Discover Your Sensory-Motor Preferences

This checklist can be used to determine which items or strategies can be used by individuals to achieve an appropriate level of alertness. As you try the items listed below, mark them with arrows to show if it increases (↑) or decreases (↓) your state. You might need to mark an item with both arrows (↑ ↓). Mark an item with an X if you do not like it. Try to find a variety of items/activities that you like.

Put Something in Your Mouth (Oral motor Input):

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> suck on ice chips (do not chew on ice, doing that can damage your teeth). <input type="checkbox"/> push/move the tongue against cheeks <input type="checkbox"/> chew/bite/lick your lips or inside of the cheeks <input type="checkbox"/> chew on a pencil/pen <input type="checkbox"/> gently hold a pencil between your teeth without biting. This causes your facial muscles to relax. <input type="checkbox"/> chew on coffee stir sticks <input type="checkbox"/> there are various items made for chewing are available through therapy catalogs <input type="checkbox"/> take slow deep breaths using the diaphragm (stomach goes out as you inhale) <input type="checkbox"/> do 4-7-8 breathing by Dr. Andrew Weil <input type="checkbox"/> play a harmonica <input type="checkbox"/> play with whistles or other blow toys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> eat a Popsicle made from juice <input type="checkbox"/> eat a pickle <input type="checkbox"/> chew sugarless gum <input type="checkbox"/> crunch on nuts or chips <input type="checkbox"/> eat popcorn <input type="checkbox"/> eat crisp cut-up vegetables <input type="checkbox"/> chew on buttons/sweatshirt strings or collars <input type="checkbox"/> whistle while you work <input type="checkbox"/> drink coffee or tea- try different types of herbal teas <input type="checkbox"/> drink warm milk <input type="checkbox"/> drink carbonated water <input type="checkbox"/> suck on a straw or stir straw to drink your beverage
--	--

Movement (Proprioceptive and/or Vestibular Input):

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> “doodle” on your paper as you work <input type="checkbox"/> tap your pencil or pen <input type="checkbox"/> rock in a rocking chair or while lying on a therapy ball <input type="checkbox"/> shift or “squirm” in your chair <input type="checkbox"/> rock own body slightly <input type="checkbox"/> slowly roll your neck and neck <input type="checkbox"/> run or jog <input type="checkbox"/> jog in place <input type="checkbox"/> ride a bike <input type="checkbox"/> jump rope <input type="checkbox"/> weight lifting <input type="checkbox"/> tap toes, heel or foot on the floor <input type="checkbox"/> kick your legs backwards into a bungee cord wrapped around the chair legs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> dance <input type="checkbox"/> yard work or gardening <input type="checkbox"/> go for a walk outside <input type="checkbox"/> hiking/backpacking <input type="checkbox"/> do stretches <input type="checkbox"/> do some yoga poses <input type="checkbox"/> shake body parts <input type="checkbox"/> do a sport – basketball, tennis, volleyball <input type="checkbox"/> horseback riding <input type="checkbox"/> swimming <input type="checkbox"/> isometric exercises, such as pushing the palms of the hands together at chest height <input type="checkbox"/> bounce while sitting on a therapy ball
--	---

Touch or Fidget (Tactile Input):

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> cool or warm shower <input type="checkbox"/> warm bath (the body gets sleepy as one cools after a warm bath) <input type="checkbox"/> receive a massage <input type="checkbox"/> pet a cat or dog <input type="checkbox"/> rub your skin. Try different amounts of pressure to see what you like. Generally deep or heavy pressure is more calming and light touch is rousing. <input type="checkbox"/> warm your hands on a mug containing a warm beverage <input type="checkbox"/> play with salt or sand and/or water 	<p>Use a fidget item (try to keep it out of view of others, so to not to bother them)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> bending a paperclip <input type="checkbox"/> use a kneaded art eraser <input type="checkbox"/> pen/pencil or pencil topper <input type="checkbox"/> earring or necklace <input type="checkbox"/> touching one's face with fingers <input type="checkbox"/> move coins, a shell or keys in your pocket <input type="checkbox"/> twirl your hair
---	---

Look (Visual Input):

<input type="checkbox"/> open the window shades right away in the morning <input type="checkbox"/> watching flames in a fireplace <input type="checkbox"/> watch the fish in an aquarium <input type="checkbox"/> go outside to watch the sunset or sunrise <input type="checkbox"/> watch waves crashing on the shore <input type="checkbox"/> play with water and oil toys <input type="checkbox"/> reading <input type="checkbox"/> look at flowers and bees in a garden <input type="checkbox"/> look at nature at a park <input type="checkbox"/> try wearing different sunglasses to see how you like different colors of lens	Determine what kind of lighting you like: <input type="checkbox"/> dim lighting, such as from a small table light <input type="checkbox"/> bright sunlight through a window <input type="checkbox"/> bright overhead room light <input type="checkbox"/> fluorescent lighting Think about how do different colors/materials affect you? <input type="checkbox"/> rose color <input type="checkbox"/> plain white walls <input type="checkbox"/> busy walls, cluttered rooms <input type="checkbox"/> strong patterns on floors
---	---

Listen (Auditory Input):

<input type="checkbox"/> Listen to music – What is your preferred type? rock music piano pop classical music <input type="checkbox"/> listening to others “hum” <input type="checkbox"/> listen to yourself sing <input type="checkbox"/> working in a quiet room <input type="checkbox"/> working in a noisy room <input type="checkbox"/> listening to birds sing and other nature sounds <input type="checkbox"/> listening to the sound of the ocean <input type="checkbox"/> playing an instrument	How do you handle loud noises? <input type="checkbox"/> a siren <input type="checkbox"/> a vacuum <input type="checkbox"/> a noisy party <input type="checkbox"/> dog barking constantly <input type="checkbox"/> blender <input type="checkbox"/> a toilet flushing Some things to try to manage loud noises: <input type="checkbox"/> chew gum (tightens the eardrums to block some of the noise) <input type="checkbox"/> wear earphone or ear plugs to block noise <input type="checkbox"/> hum to yourself <input type="checkbox"/> cover your ears with your hands <input type="checkbox"/> work on decreasing your stress in general, that decreases the sensitivity of the ears
--	---

Points to Consider

- Adults, with more mature nervous systems, can use small inputs to maintain regulation. Children with more immature brains and tend to need more vigorous inputs to maintain their focus.
- Think about what type of inputs you tend to use comfort your nervous system. How do you manage your environment to be able to focus and work? Go through each main category and think about which items you use. Figure out some new items to try and see if you like them. Generally, when an input is successful for an adult or child, after trying it, you will feel a drive to use it again.
- Restrict your use of candy for calming. Candy and simple carbohydrates cause a short-lived spike in blood sugar, followed by a crash later. When the crash happens, the body releases adrenaline, glucagon, cortisol and growth hormones are used to regulate blood sugar level. These hormones can then stimulate the brain (Turner, 2009).

References

Lippincott, Carrie (2015) Personal Knowledge
 Turner, Natasha (2009) *The Hormone Diet*, 153-163, Canada, Random House
 Weil, Andrew (2015) *Three Breathing Exercises*, <http://www.drweil.com/drw/u/ART00521/three-breathing-exercises.html>
 Williams, Mary Sue & Shellenberger (1994) *How Does Your Engine Run?* A-55 &A-56, Albuquerque, New Mexico, TherapyWorks, Inc