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Incorporating Self-Regulation and Sensory Strategies into Your Speech Sessions

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In order for a child to learn a new skill, it is important that the child is in a calm, attentive, and engaged state. To achieve this, he or she may need to learn self-regulation strategies and/or implement sensory accommodations. Acquiring self-regulation skills begins with co-regulation, a type of regulation where two people work together to achieve a regulated state. This usually involves a parent or educator helping a child reach a regulated state. As the child grows and becomes more aware of their own emotions, they can then self-regulate. Let's look into how you can incorporate self-regulation skills and sensory accommodations to make your speech sessions more successful.

Encourage Self-Regulation

Acknowledge Emotions

Acknowledging and discussing your child's emotions can help create a healthy environment for therapy to take place. Emotion charts can be useful in differentiating emotions and helping your clients identify their feelings. The therapist can help the child by labeling different emotions in the moment. For example, if a child begins yelling or throwing an object to protest an activity, the therapist can acknowledge the emotion and then provide options to resolve the conflict. You may say, "I understand you are upset or frustrated. Why don't we take a break?"



IT'S OKAY TO FEEL...



Increase Awareness of Sensations

Many children have difficulty identifying their sensations while experiencing different emotions. The therapist and/or parent can help connect the dots for their children by asking probing questions such as, "What are you feeling?" or "What sensations do you feel in your body?" Using a body map or providing a list of sensations such as,

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(cont.)

"tight, relaxed, fast, slow" may be helpful. It could also be helpful to model your own sensations during different emotions. For example, you may say, "When I feel angry, I feel my heart beat faster and sometimes I feel tightness in my body." Hearing these examples can help a child understand their own sensations more.

Other Alternatives

SLPs can also promote self-regulation by providing a list of strategies children can use to self-regulate during times of dysregulation. For example, you may say, "I can see you feel frustrated with sitting in your chair during this activity. What if we sit on the rug or stand while we complete our work?" Listed below are some common strategies you can use to help calm a child when they are feeling dysregulated:



- Take deep breaths
- Count to 10
- Do a body scan
- Take a break
- Incorporate movement



Use Sensory Accommodations

Using sensory accommodations in your speech sessions can help satisfy sensory needs and allow your child to remain in a regulated state. Here is a list of common sensory accommodations you can try with your students.

Physical Accommodations



- Use flexible seating such as ball chairs, wobble chairs, cushions, bean bags, etc.
- Provide proprioceptive input by using weighted blankets or allowing breaks to complete heavy work



- Allow the student to use handheld fidgets
- Provide tactile-rich experiences such as activities with rice/beans, putty, or other varying textures

Auditory Accommodations



- Have noise-reducing headphones available if the child seems bothered by noise in their environment
- Provide a quiet workspace if available
- Play calming music or preferred music to provide additional auditory stimuli if needed

Visual Accommodations



- Use dim lighting or alternative lighting
- Provide color overlays for reading
- Use room dividers
- Limit the number of items on a page

An occupational therapist can assist in recommending specific sensory accommodations/exercises through an OT evaluation. Reach out to an occupational therapist if you have concerns regarding your child's sensory needs.

Use the "Map My Emotions" worksheet on the following page to help your students identify different sensations they feel.

Resources:

"Here are some classroom accommodations which may help children remain calm, focused and organized." Autism Society of Greater Akron. Accessed June 19th, 2023. <https://autismakron.org/index.php/documents/school/106-sensory-strategies/file>

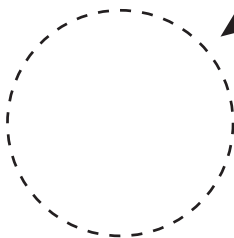
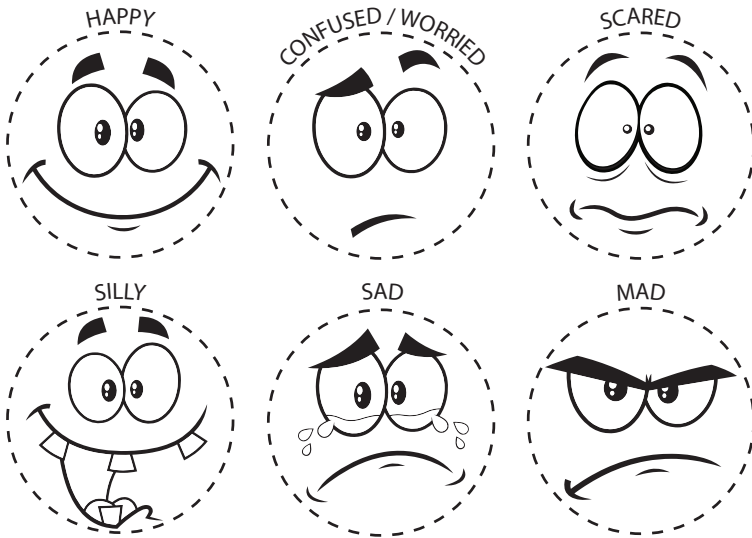
"Teaching Emotions: More Than Just 'Happy' and 'Sad'!" Speechy Musings. Accessed June 21st, 2023. <https://speechymusings.com/2021/04/21/teaching-emotions-more-than-happy-sad/>

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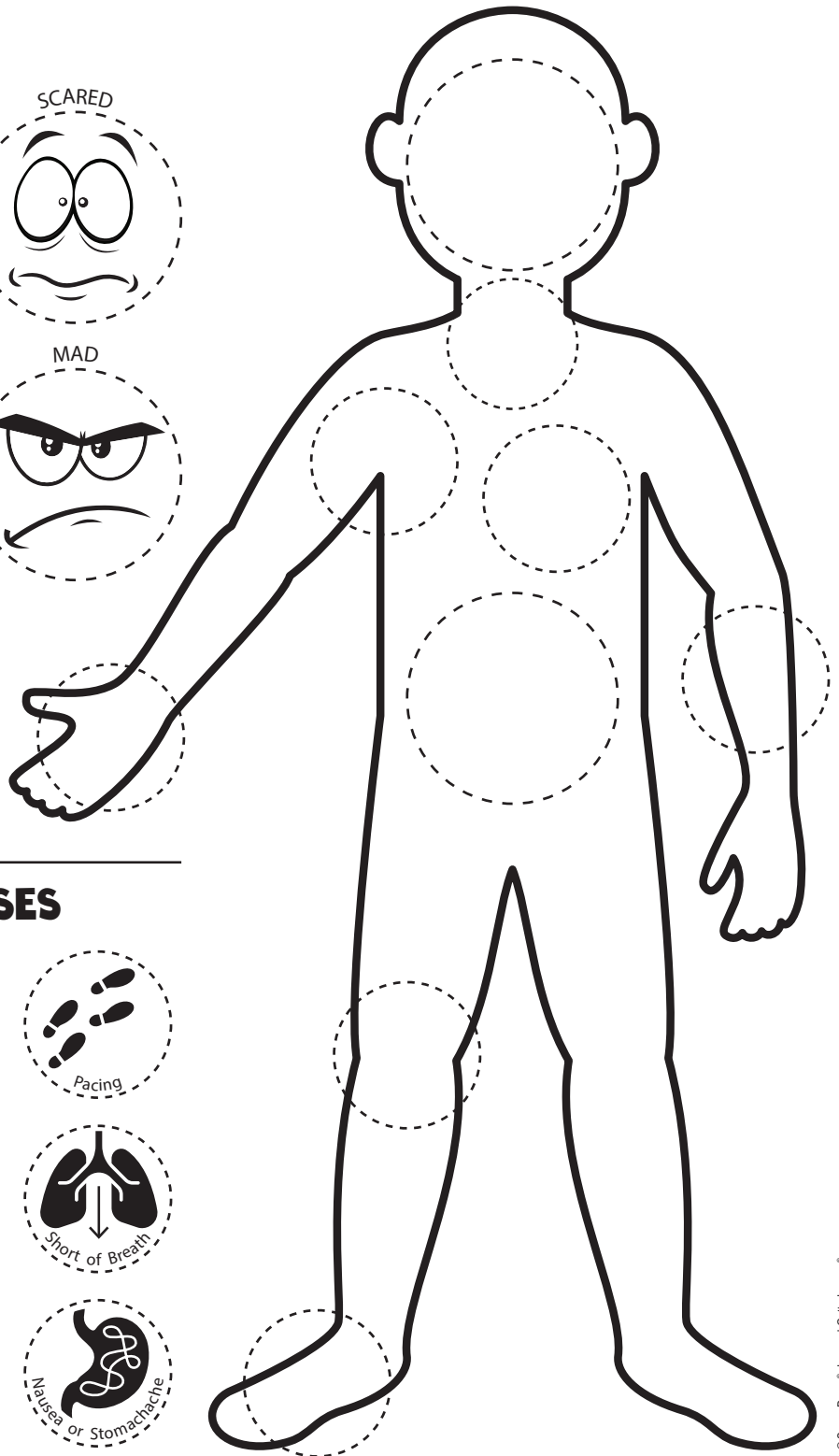
Map My Emotions!

Cut out each **Emotion Face** and all of the **Physical Responses**. Choose one face at a time and think about how the emotion feels. Can you match the Physical Responses to the location in the body where the responses can be felt?

EMOTION FACES



Use this circle to draw your own emotion face.



PHYSICAL RESPONSES

