



Sensory Friendly Home Tips

Simple ways to support comfort and participation

A spot to belong. A place to grow.

Every child experiences sounds, movement, touch, light, smells, and other sensations differently. Some children seek more input, while others become overwhelmed easily. Your child's needs may also change depending on sleep, stress, illness, or the activity. A sensory friendly home gives your child options and support so everyday activities feel more manageable. You do not need expensive equipment or a special room. Start with one small change and notice whether it helps.

Start by noticing

Look for patterns during routines that feel difficult:

- Is the room noisy, bright, crowded, or busy?
- Are clothing, food textures, or smells uncomfortable?
- Has your child been sitting for a long time?
- Are they hungry, tired, or needing a break?
- What helps them feel comfortable and return to the activity?

Describe what you see without assuming the cause. "They cover their ears when the vacuum starts" gives you a useful place to begin. Sensory needs may be one part of the picture; communication, pain, task difficulty, and other needs also matter.

Create a comfortable place to take a break

Choose an accessible spot with a few familiar items, such as a cushion, favorite book, stuffed animal, or comfortable chair.

- Keep the space simple and uncluttered.
- Offer softer lighting if your child prefers it.
- Let your child help choose what belongs there.
- Make it available as a supportive option, rather than a punishment.
- Allow your child to leave freely and stay nearby if they want company.

You might say: **"Would you like a quiet break here or would you like me to sit with you?"**



Turn down background noise

- Turn off the television when no one is watching.
- Reduce competing sounds during meals, homework, and conversations.
- Give a heads-up before starting a blender, vacuum, or other loud appliance.
- Offer a quieter location when possible.
- If your child finds them helpful, offer hearing protection during brief, loud activities while making sure they can hear important instructions.

Try: **“The vacuum will be loud. Would you like to move to the other room before I start?”**

Adjust lighting and visual clutter

- Offer natural light or a lamp when practical.
- Reduce glare on work surfaces and screens.
- Keep frequently used items in predictable places.
- Use baskets or bins to make cleanup easier.
- Clear a small workspace instead of trying to organize the entire room at once.

Ask your child what feels comfortable. A dim room may help one child and bother another.

Build movement into the day

Offer safe, enjoyable movement between seated activities. Options may include:

- Dancing to a favorite song.
- Taking a walk.
- Playing an animal movement game.
- Pushing against a wall.
- Helping carry light groceries or move a laundry basket.
- Playing outdoors with appropriate supervision.

Let your child choose and stay within their abilities. Movement does not calm every child; some activities may make them more excited. Notice what happens afterward and adjust.



Make clothing and grooming more comfortable

- Offer choices between two appropriate outfits.
- Notice whether tags, seams, waistbands, or fabrics cause discomfort.
- Let your child explore a washcloth, brush, or toothbrush before using it.
- Explain what will happen before touching their face, hair, or body.
- Break a routine into smaller steps and offer pauses.
- Encourage your child to do the steps they can manage.

Try: **“Would you like to brush your hair first, or would you like me to start?”**

If a routine appears painful or suddenly becomes difficult, check for a physical cause rather than assuming it is sensory.

Keep mealtimes comfortable

- Reduce background noise and distractions when possible.
- Offer a stable seat with foot support when available.
- Include a familiar food when practical.
- Allow appropriate utensils or a napkin if touching food feels uncomfortable.
- Let your child explore unfamiliar foods without pressure to taste.
- Keep conversation neutral and avoid describing foods or eating as “good” or “bad.”

Ask your therapist about individual feeding concerns. Coughing, choking, or pain during eating needs medical attention.

Make transitions more predictable

- Give a brief warning before changing activities.
- Use a simple picture schedule, timer, or “first, then” statement if helpful.
- Explain changes in the usual routine.
- Offer a small choice within the next activity.
- Allow extra time when you can.

Try: **“First shoes, then outside. Would you like to put them on here or by the door?”**

Some children find timers stressful. Choose the support that helps your child understand what comes next.



When your child feels overwhelmed

Start with safety and connection.

- Use fewer words and a calm voice.
- Reduce noise, light, or demands when possible.
- Offer space or company based on your child's preference.
- Avoid unexpected touch or insisting on a hug.
- Save teaching and problem-solving for when your child is ready.

You might say: **"I'm here. You can have some space, or I can stay close."**

Try one change at a time

Choose one routine and one adjustment. Notice whether your child seems more comfortable, participates more easily, or needs less help.

If an activity causes distress, dizziness, nausea, pain, or more difficulty participating, stop and discuss it with your therapist. Ask for individual guidance before introducing weighted items, brushing programs, spinning activities, or suspended equipment.

Your child does not need to tolerate every sensation to succeed. Helping them communicate their needs, make choices, and use supports is meaningful progress.

Not sure where to start? Ask your therapist:

"What is one change we could try at home to make this routine easier?"

Give us a call at (207)546-2880