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Sensory Exploration Curriculum Development for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities at Friends Life Community

Caroline Stegall, OTD/S



Agency: Friends Life Community (FLC)

Purpose: FLC is a certified 501(c)3 five-day-a-week program that serves individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in Nashville, TN. They provide drama therapy, social clubs, career coaching, and life coaching.

At FLC “we are advocates for inclusion and activists for changing perceptions about adults with IDD.”

Mission: To create an opportunity for teenagers and adults with IDD to develop socially, grow personally, and enjoy community as they experience life together.

Population Overview:

- Teens and adults with IDD
- Includes a wide variety of diagnoses such as Down Syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Cerebral Palsy.
- Friends Life serves ~75 Friends

Identified Needs

- Education regarding sensory strategies to assist Friends with sensory regulation
- Creation of new and innovative curriculum to increase FLC’s day-programming options
- Some Friends expressed a need for a more sensory friendly environment at the FLC building- sighting it often gets excessively loud and over stimulating



Project Goals

The goals of this experiential component were to:

- Utilize current evidence-based research to identify the best sensory practices for adults with IDD
- Develop a curriculum focused on sensory exploration and sensory regulation
- Design activities that stimulate interest and participation with Friends to increase understanding of personal sensory preferences and regulation techniques
- Create proposal alongside sensory taskforce with proposed changes to create a more sensory friendly environment at FLC

Outcome: Sensory Exploration Curriculum

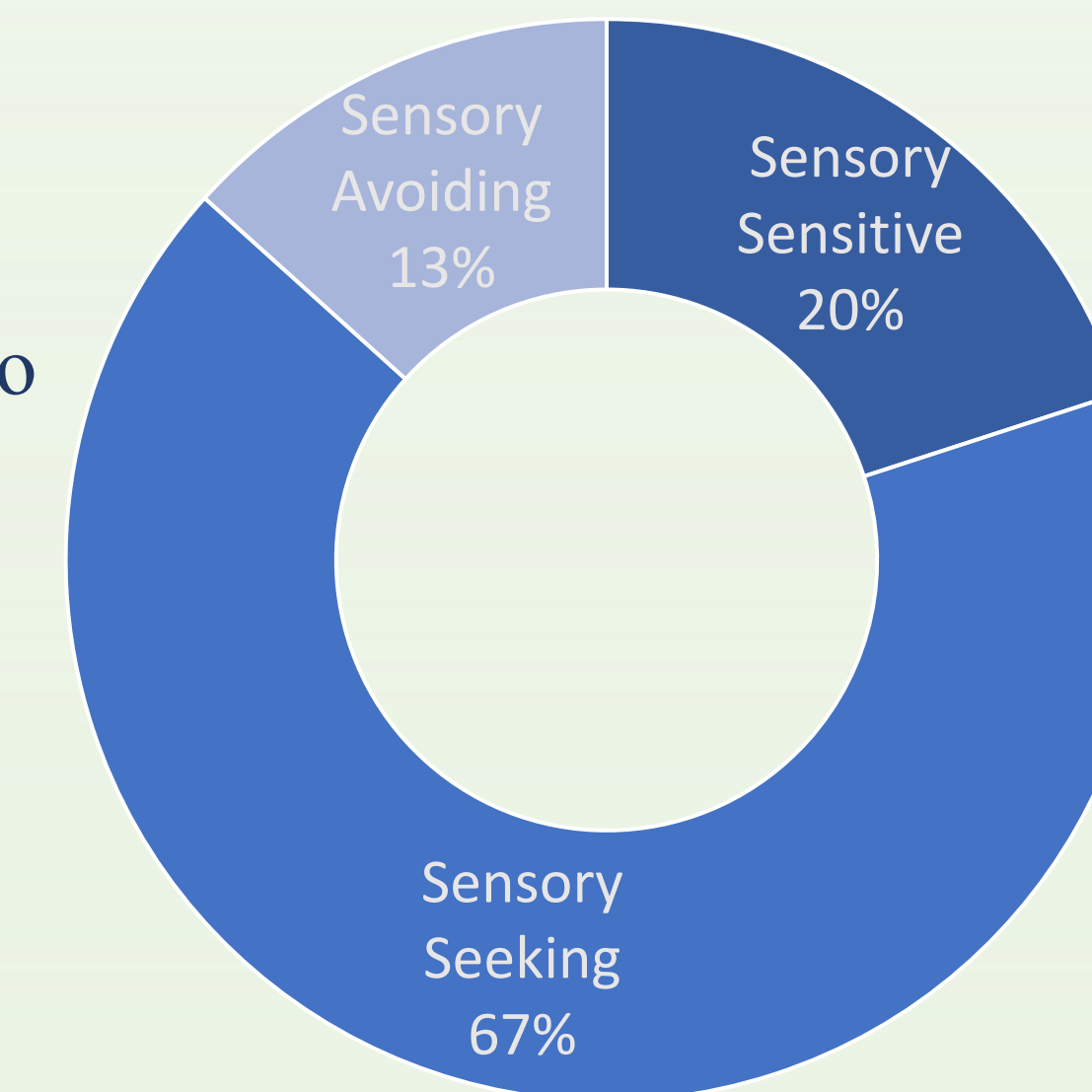
Overview: Sensational Senses is a 13- week class curriculum that focuses on sensory exploration and sensory processing/integration. Classes focus on the different senses including touch, hearing, smell, taste, proprioception, and vestibular sense.

Group Goals:

1. By the end of the course, Friends will create a personalized sensory diet with help from staff as needed listing at least one calming activity and one alerting activity per sense.
2. By the end of the course, Friends will actively engage in sensory exploration to promote sensory integration, creativity, and emotional regulation skills.
3. Friends will learn and utilize sensory-based strategies, such as deep pressure input or fidget tools, to regulate sensory needs and promote attention and focus.

Needs Assessment/ Reason for Curriculum Topic:

- A modified version of the Sensory Profile Questionnaire was given to caretakers and to select Friends to fill out to learn more about the sensory trends at FLC within the Friends
 - 15 total responses collected
 - Results displayed in chart- trend of increased sensory seeking behaviors



COURSE OUTLINE	
Session 1 Introduction to the Senses!	Session 8 Sense: Smell Activity: Scented Play-dough
Session 2 Sense: Touch Activity: Fidgets	Session 9 Sense: Taste Activity:
Session 3 Sense: Touch Activity: Kinetic Sand	Session 10 Sense: Proprioception Activity: Stress Ball
Session 4 Sense: Sight Activity: Color Collage	Session 11 Sense: Proprioception Activity: Yoga
Session 5 Sense: Sight Activity: Sensory Bottles	Session 12 Activity: Nature Walk
Session 6 Sense: Hearing Activity: Musical Instrument Class	Session 13 Conclusion! Activity: Art

Curriculum Deliverables:

- Creation of 40-page manual with facilitation guides and lesson plans
- Design of 10 PowerPoints to pair with weekly lesson plans
- Each Friend will create personalized sensory diets
- Friends will create and explore various sensory items that can be added to FLC’s sensory kits including:
 - Kinetic sand
 - Scented playdough
 - DIY stress balls
 - Sensory bottles
 - DIY rain sticks

Sensory Exploration Worksheet

NAME: _____

Activity	No Effect 👎	Calming 😊	Alerting 😡

Sensory Diet

NAME: _____

Sense	What gives the most CALM?	What gives the most ALERT?
👂 CAN HEAR...		
👁️ CAN LOOK AT...		
👃 CAN SMELL...		
👄 CAN TASTE...		
👋 CAN TOUCH...		

Worksheets:

This **Sensory Exploration Worksheet** was created to be used to rate if different stimuli were calming, alerting, or had no effect to increase understanding of sensory preferences and aid in creation of personalized Sensory Diet

Every participant will fill out a **Sensory Diet Worksheet** that features alerting and calming activities categorized by different senses. Friends will be able to utilize their unique sensory plan at FLC and outside of the agency to improve self-regulation, mood, behavior and daily functioning skills.

Outcome: FLC Sensory Taskforce

During my time at Friends Life Community a Sensory Task Force was formed to address the sensory needs of the agency.

The task force consisted of myself, 4 FLC staff members, and 2 Friends.

Over-arching goals:

1. Reduce noise
2. Keep a calm space
3. More sensory friendly spaces

Proposed projects to be implemented in the future:

- Architectural and design changes such as curtains and carpet to absorb sound
- Changing lighting- reducing overhead florescent lighting and opting for more lamps and natural lights
- Created a dedicated sensory room that Friends can utilize when feeling overstimulated
- Providing sensory toys/ fidgets in each room at FLC



Acknowledgments

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