

Visual and Sensory Challenges and Supports for Individuals with Autism

Challenge	Support/Strategies
<p>Sensory Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensory sensitivity to noise, light, texture, tastes, smells • Self stimulation such as rocking, spinning • Ritualistic behavior such as lining things up, not be able to work until everything in place 	<p>Consult with occupational therapist regarding sensory issues and incorporate recommendations into work routine.</p> <p>Educate coworkers and supervisor about consumer's high or low sensitivity to stimuli that others are often not aware of or relate to common sensitivities that many of us experience with crowds, loud music, fear of heights etc.</p> <p>Explain to coworkers some self stimulating and ritualistic behavior may provide comfort and a feeling of control.</p> <p>Modify work environment when possible (schedule starting time 10 minutes earlier to reduce crowding when entering work site) or provide consumer with a strategy such as ear buds with soothing music to help with panic in crowded spaces.</p>
<p>Organizational demands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messy work area • Overwhelmed by task • Difficulty in getting started 	<p>Develop list of items to take to work.</p> <p>Template/diagram for organization of work area. Work system from left to right.</p> <p>Time line, step by step sequence of steps for job tasks.</p> <p>Use checklists (with graphics if needed), rubrics.</p> <p>Allow more time to complete tasks.</p> <p>Reduce the amount of work so it can be completed in the specified time.</p>
<p>Visual skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds more effectively to pictures, videos, graphic software 	<p>Video or PowerPoint introduction and orientation to job site, duties, workers and supervisor before going to job. Pictures of site may be an additional strategy.</p> <p>Picture schedules, visual reminders of work rules on the work area wall.</p> <p>Talking Photo Album</p> <p>Concepts maps or webs to see the big picture, timelines</p>

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Sensory Area	Calming Activities	Alerting Activities
Tactile	Wear soft clothing like sweat pants. Squeeze resistive putty Wear ankle weights or weighted vest	Handle fidget items Hold something cold Wash face with cool cloth Light touch to the palm of the hand
Proprioceptive	Push heavy object Push a heavy cart Carry boxes Vacuum the floor	Deliver office mail, papers. Exercise Pick up trash in hall ways
Vestibular	Rock in a rocking chair	
Gustatory	Chew, suck on a pen top, necklace, hard candy. Suck liquids through a straw. Drink warm liquids	Eat crunchy foods-pretzels, ice, carrots, celery, apple. Eat chewy food-licorice, taffy, gum. Keep water bottle with cold water on desk
Olfactory	Write with a scented pen or marker. Smell potpourri, scented candle.	Use scented lotion or soap Spray a citrus room deodorizer
Auditory	Listen to quiet music with slow, even beat. Listen to soft singing or humming. Work in a quiet environment Use headphones to block noise.	Prepare in advance for loud, strange noises (startle). Listen to music with varied pitch, loudness or uneven beat. Speak in animated high and low voice.
Visual	Work in dim light or with no lights. Work at distraction free desk. Work in natural light.	Work in bright light. Use colored paper. Use highlighter.

Adapted from Simple Strategies That Work! p. 18-19. www.asperger.net