

## **Environmental Changes for Sensory Differences**

- Use dim, natural lighting. Avoiding fluorescent lighting if possible as this can be seen to flicker, can be alerting and can also make a noise. Dimmer switches can be useful for flexibility.
- Use slow moving visuals such as lava lamps, fish tanks, bubble tubes, star light projectors or fibre optic lights.
- Use pale colours on walls. Avoid bright or busy wallpaper.
- It has been suggested that it's best to avoid using slatted blinds, particularly vertical ones, as these can be distracting. Curtains may be a better option, with blackout curtains helping someone who is particularly sensitive to light. If someone has a tendency to pull on curtain rails, curtains can be held up with Velcro, so damage to walls is reduced.
- Stick-on coverings can also be placed on windows, giving privacy whilst letting some light in.
- Reduce visual distractions by keeping the walls clear of lots of pictures or visual clutter.
- Use plain flooring to keep visual clutter to a minimum. Ideally use one colour.
- Carpet will absorb or dampen sound and can create a cosy and safe feeling, whilst wood or hard floors will increase the noise levels and echo of a room.
- Provide a quiet and less stimulating corner of the room for a child to go to/use to calm down.
- Furnishings can help to reduce noise levels.
- Use blankets/ sheets/ play tents/ dens for child to sleep or just relax in with lots of cushions inside to squash into.
- Use beanbag chairs and giant pillows to sit on.
- Child to sit on gym ball when working or watching TV.
- Provide relaxing music on tape player or headphones. For example, ocean waves, rain, classical music, nature tapes, slow/rhythmic music, white noise or nature sound machines.
- Keep toys/items/supplies neatly organized in bins and/or in their proper place.
- Avoid strong odours where possible - open windows when cooking.
- Show the child their routines in pictures (with words if needed).

- Using ear defenders *for short periods* to transition to and/or acclimatise to noisy environments can be useful. It is important to ensure that these are only used for short periods to ensure that individuals are given the opportunity to de-sensitise their hearing. Using them for long periods of time can sensitise hearing even further, so when the person takes the defenders off everything can sound even louder than it did before.

**References:**

<https://www.sensory-processing-disorder.com/environmental-modifications.html>

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/in-the-home/environment.aspx>