

IMPROVING FOCUS & BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM

MODULE 13 - FOR PARENTS

Tips & Tricks for After School Success

Has your child been sitting in a classroom all day?
Or have they been on and off the screen for virtual school?
Either way, they need a BREAK!

1 AFTER SCHOOL SENSORY DIET OR SENSORY CHECKLIST

- First, give your child the input they seek - meet their threshold. If they're running around and bouncing off the walls, they are telling you that they need vestibular input!
- Then, provide calming sensory input to help regulate the central nervous system. Think proprioceptive input - "but first heavy work!"

It may take time and it will definitely take consistency! It won't work every time, and that's okay. The more you incorporate these sensory diet activities, the more your child will learn what's helpful for their body! Eventually, your kiddo may be able to express wants / needs instead of having a sensory meltdown. That's the goal!

2 QUIET TIME TO DECOMPRESS

- Oftentimes a child may not feel like talking right after school. That's ok! Don't force it!
- Relax in a quiet, dimly-lit space, such as a pop up tent.
- Use oral motor input such as chewing gum or bubbles.
- Listen to calming music (or preferred music if it helps to feel calm and happy).
- Headphones can be beneficial if the environment is noisy.
- Fidgets such as fidget cubes or stress balls can be helpful as well.

3 MOVEMENT

- Your child may seek out movement after a long day of sitting. Give them the movement that they seek!
- Complete a sensory, movement-based obstacle course. Jump, crash, crawl. Push, pull, dance.
- Use a visual timer and visual schedule.
- Incorporate as many senses as possible. Essential oils, music, gum, bubble mountain, "cloud dough," etc.
- Write down a list of activities specific for after school, cut them out and put them in a container. Have your child pick from the container and complete the activities. Include movement and quiet time tasks.

4 SNACK

- Your child might be hungry after a long day at school. Provide options for crunchy, chewy snacks that provide proprioceptive (calming!) feedback. Provide water or a smoothie with a straw.
- Apples, carrots, celery
- Chips, crackers
- Jerky, beef sticks
- Trail mix
- Frozen fruit, popsicles
- Fruit and veggie smoothie

Why Does My Child Have Meltdowns After School?

1 HOLDING IT TOGETHER ALL DAY

If a child is able to get through the school day without any meltdowns, they may come home and not be able to hold it together any longer. They did their best all day, and now they're tired!

2 HOME IS A SAFE SPACE

A child is more likely to have a meltdown in a safe environment - often times that safe space is at home with family members.

3 HUNGRY OR THIRSTY

After school hunger is real! And children often don't drink enough water during the school day - so they arrive home hungry and thirsty, but might not be able to verbalize it.

4 TOO MANY AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

The overwhelm can be real - after school activities such as therapy appointments, sports for them or siblings, etc. If school itself is overwhelming, after school activities will definitely be overwhelming.

5 SENSORY OVERLOAD OR CRAVING SENSORY INPUT

The child might be dealing with sensory overload from school- bright lights, loud noises, weird smells, etc. and shut down as soon as they're home. They might also be craving sensory input they weren't able to get at school, in which they seem to be bouncing off the walls when they get home from school and are trying to achieve an appropriate arousal level.

After School Activity Ideas

ACTIVITIES:

- Set up an obstacle course
- Make sensory slime
- Do a puzzle
- Dance to some music
- Doodle or color
- Bubble mountain
- Do yoga
- Do a somersault, log roll or cartwheel
- Make a sensory path
- Do hopscotch
- Pretend play / play dress up
- Rock and roll over a therapy ball
- Chew gum or suck on hard candy
- Blow a cotton ball across the room
- Ride your bike or scooter outside
- Play with play doh
- Listen to music or play an instrument
- Smell different essential oils
- Doodle with chalk outside
- Make up new animal walk
- Play in a sensory bin
- Make a snack
- Go bowling with your toys