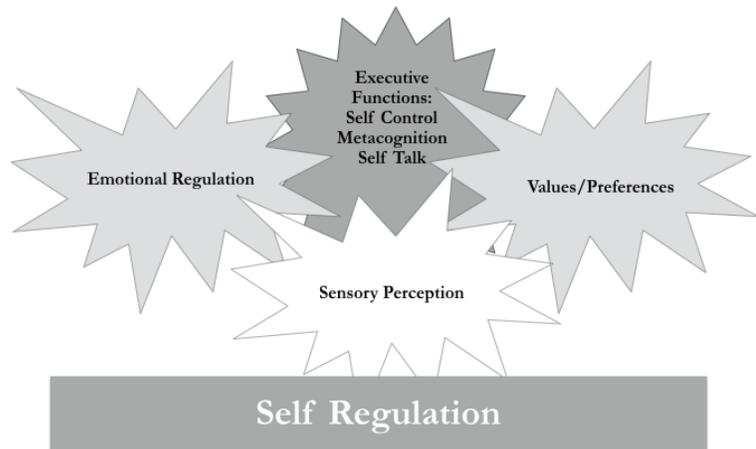


## Optimizing Self-Regulation through Body Activated Learning

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### Why is Body Activated Learning Unique?

Body Activated Learning goes beyond just providing sensory-based support strategies for self-regulation to targeting the sensory systems needed to become an active learner. The process combines activities to optimize arousal, build foundational body skills, and recover from skill demands. In this way, we can optimize attention and engagement while building *Sensational Learners*. Some programs combine sensory and social strategies. However, they often rely on teaching volitional control over behavior with sensory strategies to recover from challenging tasks and social interactions. Others use exercises based on research by neuroscientists on how movement impacts learning. However, no other program combines sensory-based and sensory integrative strategies to directly facilitate adaptive response patterns and learning demands. By making the handbook easy to navigate, teachers and paraprofessionals without extensive training or background in sensory terminology can create unique exercise combinations following the Body Activated Learning process. At home, parents can utilize and carryover Body Activated Learning concepts and principles to support their child's self regulation and optimize engagement.



### Definitions and Terminology:

Many of the terms used to define Executive Function skills are often interchanged with words to describe sensory processing and self regulation which are often confused. The following definitions will enhance your understanding of the differences.

- **Executive Function:** A set of processes occurring in the cortex of the brain that are necessary for *the cognitive control of behavior* including volitional self control, attentional control, metacognition, working memory, and cognitive flexibility, as well as self talk/reasoning, problem solving, and long-term planning.
- **Self Control:** The *cognitive ability* to volitionally control oneself and make a choice or decision with regard to emotion, desire, and behavior, especially in difficult situations.
- **Arousal:** The state of the nervous system. One's nervous system must be in an optimal state of arousal in order to attend, concentrate, and perform task demands.
- **Self Regulation:** The ability to attain, sustain, and change our arousal to adaptively respond to the demands of a task or situation.
- **Sensory Processing:** The ability to take in, manipulate, and organize sensory information in order adapt and respond to changing environmental and task demands.
- **Adaptive Response:** An action that is appropriate and successful in meeting some environmental demand.

## The Body Activated Learning Program:



**Energize:** The key components of these exercises are unpredictability, speed, and movement which are designed to increase alertness and connection to one's body for active learning



**Restore:** The key components of these exercises are rhythm, pressure/deep touch, and respiration, which provide calming and organizing sensory input.



**Activation:** These exercises are designed to connect the senses and encourage brain activation.



**Regroup:** These exercises facilitate the ability to quickly recover from skill demands using vision breaks, stretching, and respiration.

### Key Components of a Sensory Diet:

- Sensory Snacks  
(quick supports/tools)
- Sensory Breaks  
(3-4 longer movement breaks)
- Supportive Leisure and Routines
- Environmental Modifications:  
Time, tolerance, safe spaces, toolbox

### Know Your Child:

Consider your child's personality, activity level, and sensory needs when putting together a sensory diet at home. Also, choose activities of high interest for your child to promote investment in the process.

### Putting the Plan into Place:

Create environmental opportunities, embed sensory supports into a child's day with supportive chores, and choose supportive leisure activities that provide sensory experiences to foster self regulation but also that they can be invested in. Develop a routine where skills are practiced during optimal times of day. Finally, utilize sensory tools to effectively support self regulation throughout the day.

### Getting Your Child on Board:

- Start small, create opportunities within the environment. Make a small part of a larger chore activity your child's job such as loading dirty clothes in the dryer or bringing the clean clothes upstairs.
- Have reasonable expectations for your child to be successful such as with activity tolerance and chores. Also have reasonable parental expectations that work for your family dynamics.
- Progress not perfection. Even small progress is progress. Celebrate small victories. It will take time.
- Make it a routine, be consistent, and stick to it.
- Change your lens. Think differently about environments and experiences. Each person processes sensory information differently. We need to be respectful of what works for each individual and set up the environment/expectations accordingly.
- Allow your child to experience the benefits for themselves. As children begin to experience the benefits of how the daily sensory activities support their mood and self regulation, they will be more motivated to stick to them and use them for themselves long term.
- Foster don't force sensational self awareness. Model the sensory strategies, make observations about behavior and responses to sensory input, and empower children to be in control of their ability to adapt in the presence of challenges.

### Take Home Message

We all have differences in the way our brains process information. This is what gives us diversity. However, if the way we process and organize information from our bodies and the environment is compromised, then the ability to meet the demands of the school environment is also compromised. By making Body Activated Learning a standard rather than an exception, we can support every child's ability to make *Sensational Achievements*.