🍃 🧩 DEVELOPING FUNCTIONAL MOVEMENT

THROUGH SENSORY BASED EXERCISE 💪 🧠

Sensory based workouts – also known as sensory circuits are a structured series **of physical exercises, carefully chosen** to target different sensory systems within the body, the vestibular (balance and coordination), proprioceptive (sense of self-movement and force) and tactile (touch sensations).

👍 They are a great way in **supporting an individual's sensory diet**, helping to regulate levels of alertness and readiness for learning/work, but they are also just in general a **wonderful 'tool'** to **add into any individuals weekly or daily routine**, so they can **carry out their everyday tasks** and everyday activities with **increased strength, precision and ease**.

🗣️ If we think about how we often hear adults say "I'm so much more productive after a walk or gym session", "I do 10 mins of yoga every morning to set myself up for the day."....🗣️

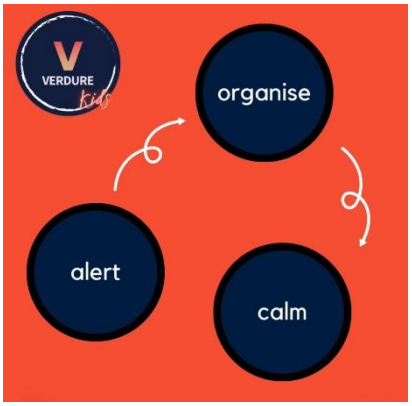
That is sensory movement. You will be warming up, working the brain and body connection and then cooling down and stretching. It's alerting, organising and calming the body and brain to be able to then carry out the day's tasks productively.

💪 **If we develop physical capabilities, we reduce the mental load required because we have supported the sensory systems of the body.** 💪

⭐ It may be that an Occupational Therapist or Physio may have prescribed/suggested developing core strength, balance and/or coordination skills, but you yourself may have spotted areas of strength or balance for everyday tasks that need to be developed – examples below.

A sensory circuit approach with sessions that are adapted to suit current capabilities and tailored to support individuals in safely pushing their limits so they progress can support in developing these skills. 🍃

👉strength for sitting on a chair.
👉balance to walk without tripping.
👉the ability to twist to make toileting independently more manageable.
👉strength and coordination to walk up or down stairs.
👉gross and fine motor skills for writing / using cutlery.
👉coordination to dress more independently.



Let's take a look at what a sensory based circuit might look like....

1. Alerting Stage

The goal of this stage is to wake up the body and mind. It includes activities that increase heart rate, stimulate the senses, and boost alertness.

✅ **Examples of Alerting Activities:**

- Jumping jacks
- Trampolining
- Skipping,
- Running on the spot
- Spinning in a chair
- Drumming on a surface

2. Organising Stage

This stage focuses on improving coordination, balance, and motor planning. It helps individuals develop better control over their movements and prepares them for structured learning/tasks.

✅ **Examples of Organising Activities:**

- Obstacle courses
- Balancing on a beam / walking along a line on the floor
- Throwing and catching a ball
- Climbing activities
- Copying movement patterns
- Pushing or pulling heavy objects and/or body weight

3. Calming Stage

The final stage helps to relax the body, regulate breathing, and prepare the individual for focused activities/work.

✅ **Examples of Calming Activities:**

- Deep pressure (hugs, weighted blankets)
- Yoga poses (child's pose, deep stretching)
- Slow rocking or swaying
- Breathing exercises (deep belly breathing)
- Listening to soothing music

Tips for Setting Up a Sensory Circuit

1. **Choose a Space:** A safe, open area with enough room for movement.
2. **Prepare Equipment:** Use equipment available to you. At the studio I have access to a range of gym kit, but you do not need to purchase specific items.

   A rucksack filled with books/basket of washing are great for heavy walking! Jumping on the bed (if allowed) can replace a trampoline. Making an obstacle course using chairs and toys. Using the bottom step of stairs for steps ups.
3. **Follow the Three Stages:** Ensure each session moves through the alerting, organising, and calming activities in sequence. Choose 2-3 exercises per stage.
4. **Adjust to Individual Needs:** Some may need more time in a specific stage to regulate effectively.
5. **Make it Fun and Engaging:** Use timers, music, make it a competition with you, or visuals to encourage participation.

Sensory circuits, morning movement, wellness workouts, afternoon adventures, bedtime bustles….whatever we want to call them, for whichever time of day it is most suited to supporting an individual, are structured as they are to not only support sensory systems of the body, but to also develop core strength and functional movement patterns to help everyday tasks become easier – not just physically, but for those everyday tasks to be achieved whilst leaving a positive impression on that individuals mental state as well.

Want further advice or support?

🍃 Although I'm not an OT or Physio, what I am qualified and insured to do is lead individuals through circuit sessions. Circuit sessions that are adapted to suit current capabilities and tailored to support individuals in safely pushing their limits so they progress. I can facilitate both individual and group sessions at my private studio in South Hykeham, as well as offer general advice and support. So please don't hesitate to get in touch ⭐

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Yours in fitness,

Laura