

Growth & Wellness

OCTOBER E-NEWSLETTER

FREE PRINTABLE

Grounding Exercise

Look on the last page for a free printable coping worksheet. This Grounding Exercise uses your 5 senses to help you feel calm anywhere. This activity uses your senses to combat anxiety and overwhelm by keeping you mindful and present, increasing your sense of safety.



UPCOMING WEBINAR!

Managing Seasonal Depression

Free 1 Hour Virtual Webinar

Join us via Zoom to learn ways to prevent and manage seasonal depression so you can thrive this winter.

- Understand Depression and Causes
- Identify Signs and Symptoms
- Gain Coping Strategies
- Learn when to ask for Help

Register online at <https://gandwpsychology.com/workshop-registration/>

ACCEPTING NEW CLIENTS

Psychotherapy - ADOS-2 Testing

Don't wait for help, reach out! We are accepting new clients and families for psychotherapy and for diagnostic autism testing. The best part is - NO WAIT LIST! If you are seeking answers or support, we are here for you.



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Winter Is Coming!

UNDERSTAND HOW WEATHER IMPACTS THOSE WITH
SENSORY SENSITIVITIES

By Emily Tarjeft MS LLP



Seasons are changing, but it doesn't have to be challenging.

I have heard it said many times, "If you don't like the weather - wait an hour!" Although this may be a joke, it is true that the season change can bring unpredictable weather with it. These changes can be inconvenient and unpleasant, and it takes an even greater toll on those with sensory sensitivities. We commonly see these sensitivities in people with Alzheimer's Disease, anxiety, ADHD, and Autism.

Challenges

Our physical body is greatly impacted by the season change, and those with sensory sensitivities feel this impact more intensely. Many people experience increased allergies in the fall due to exposure to ragweed, dust, and mold. Allergies can lead to unpleasant symptoms like sniffles, stuffy nose, itchy eyes, and migraines. The change in humidity can lead to dry skin and worsen eczema. Some days bring a wide range of temperatures, requiring us to adjust our clothing layers throughout the day. However, some have a hard time recognizing bodily temperature signals so they cannot easily adjust leaving them feeling too warm or too cold.

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Daylight saving time takes a toll on the body as our clocks and routine change, but our internal clock is an hour off. This leads to bodily signals not lining up with the new schedule.

Season changes cause disruption to the environment and routines. Our morning routine can change from being able to walk out of the house in whatever we have on to taking extra time to gear up with boots, gloves and a coat just to leave the house. Summer clothes no longer cut it in dropping temperatures, and warm clothing with long sleeves and pants are now required. Clothing can create multiple challenges: different physical sensations and a change in routine. Summer clothing can cover less of the body, and tends to be lightweight and breathable. Winter clothing is the opposite; it covers up the body, produces different sensations, is often thicker, and some materials are even scratchier. It may be difficult to adjust the routine, to shift from the go-to comfortable shorts to needing to pick something warmer, requiring more mental effort before a new go-to is established. Much like clothing, foods can change with the weather, as new produce is in season. A change in foods can bring on different smells, textures, and tastes.

Strategies to Cope

Some of these tips may not be entirely applicable for your life, and that's okay. Focus on meeting the needs of the individual, and not what works for someone else or what is considered "socially acceptable." These are suggestions that can be adapted to each person's specific needs.

Please remember the external changes require more mental and physical efforts, so those with sensory sensitivities will have an even smaller window of tolerance as many of their resources are being used to transition to the new season.

For those who deal with allergies, it is helpful to wipe away any allergens or pollen off of hair, face, and body at the end of the day to reduce irritation. Many find relief by rinsing the nasal passage daily with a sterile saline solution. Some options for this can include the Neti Pot or Little Remedies Sterile Saline Mist, but consult your doctor or pediatrician to see if this is right for you.



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Reduce the effects of dry skin by staying hydrated and eating foods high in essential fatty acids. Make drinking water more enjoyable by adding fruit or herbs, like mint. Experiment with different flavor combinations and find what works best. Incorporate foods with Omega-3 fatty acids into the mix, including fish, particularly salmon and tuna, nuts and seeds like chia seeds and walnuts, and plant oils like canola oil and flaxseed oil. Lotion can be a great way to help moisturize skin, however some find the texture unpleasant. Explore other moisturizing options like body bars, oils, coconut oil, or aloe vera gel to see what is most tolerable. If the dry skin is persistent, it may be related to a lack of nutrients. Deficiencies in vitamin D and A, zinc, iron, and niacin can lead to dry skin. Talk to your primary care provider to ensure there isn't a nutritional cause for chronic dry skin. Humidifiers can be used to increase moisture in the air at home, helping to keep skin healthy.



If checking in with bodily cues is difficult, try adding external reminders to check in on temperature. Depending on level of independence, this can be done with an alarm or reminder on a phone or smart watch, prompting the user to check in with their body and adjust clothing layers or thermostat if needed. For others, it may take a reminder from someone else, such as a parent or teacher, to have a check in and get support to address needs, if any. Even with reminders, there may still be a need for external regulation. My favorite way to help regulate temperature after playing outside is with a nice warm drink, like hot cocoa or tea. Baths or showers can be used to help either warm up or cool down, depending on what is needed. Utilize the dryer to warm up towels and clothing after a shower to keep nice and warm. If a cold bed makes the nighttime routine harder, try using a heating pad or warm water bottle to get the blankets and sheets cozy and enticing.

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Most people find routines to be helpful, and routines are especially helpful for people who are neurodivergent. Prepare for the routine changes and disruptions with Social Stories, narratives about new routines or non-routine events. Visual schedules can be used to help to adjust to the new routines by displaying the time and activity. Having the time or a picture of a clock with the time can help reinforce following the clock and not the sun.



It is also helpful to start incorporating new items into the environment, and allow exploration of those items at the individual's pace. For example, bring out the snow boots now! Yes, it's early, but doing so now will allow time to adjust to seeing them by the front door, and may lead to exploration, like wearing them around the house. This leads to increased familiarity and trust, making it easier to use these items when it snows and they are necessary.

Start putting those winter clothes in the drawer to get used to seeing them. Break in any new items so they will be more comfortable when it's time to use them. This can be done by washing clothing, cutting out tags, or wearing them around the house. Start incorporating the winter scents and foods, too. Seasonal foods can be incorporated slowly with just using one or a few ingredients in a meal. Allow the individual to get familiar with the new foods by seeing them at the grocery store and involving them in meal preparation. Get used to the sensations of winter in a playful way by creating sensory bins with ice, and some shaved ice to mimic snow. As you are incorporating the new items, make sure that familiar items are still available to provide comfort.

The most important thing to remember is to be gentle and compassionate with yourself and with others who have sensory sensitivities. Change can be hard, even if it comes with good things.



GROUNDING EXERCISE

Begin by taking a few slow, deep breaths. Once you find your breath, identify things around you. The more you engage your senses the better. Feel free to linger and explore the sensations, and move on to the next when you are ready.

4 THINGS I TOUCH:

3 THINGS I HEAR:

2 THINGS I SMELL:

5 THINGS I SEE:

1 THING I TASTE:

