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BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Each of us perceives the world through our senses – hearing, sight, touch, taste, smell, as well as balance and body sensation (proprioception). The brain typically integrates this information and helps us react – for example, to jump away from something hot approaching or to focus despite noise. In people with sensory processing disorder (SPD), the brain has difficulty correctly receiving or interpreting stimuli. This doesn't mean someone is "behaving badly" – their senses simply work differently.

Peer workshops are intended for healthy students who experience daily contact with students who, among other things, experience sensory processing difficulties.

DESCRIPTION OF IMPLEMENTED STRATEGIES

The workshop was introduced to students through a short presentation explaining its goals on neurodiversity, inclusion, and empathy. Issues related to Sensory Processing Difficulties were particularly discussed. The session was divided into three parts: introduction, group activities, and reflection. Students worked in small teams on games and discussion tasks to explore different perspectives and experiences. Interactive methods, visual materials, and open questions were used to keep students engaged. Activities were adapted to various learning styles, ensuring that everyone could participate comfortably.

MODULE 2 SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER (SPD)



Basic strategies for working with students with sensory processing difficulties:

- Adapt the environment (quiet, limited stimuli, order).
- Introduce sensory breaks (movement, relaxation).
- Use simple, clear instructions.
- Allow for individual strategies (e.g., headphones, balls).
- Gradually increase the difficulty and number of stimuli.
- Monitor reactions and respond flexibly.



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Rules for working with students who have sensory processing difficulties:

1. Everyone has different needs.
2. We don't judge others, if someone reacts differently to sounds, smells, or touch.
3. We all have an influence on creating a peaceful atmosphere in the classroom.

LEARNING GAMES AND ACTIVITIES DEVELOPED

During the workshops, exercises from the Guide for Peers were used:

Game 1 "SENSOBEAR - a journey through a sensory world"

Players went on an adventure with SensoBear — a friendly teddy who experiences sights, sounds, smells, movement, and touch in different ways. As the children played, they learned how people could sense the world differently. The goal was to earn empathy points by helping characters, showing kindness, and understanding their challenges.

Game 2 "Sensory Mission"

Players took on the role of "sensory explorers" who completed a series of communication tasks, each simulating a different type of sensory challenge. The goal was to complete the mission while maintaining good cooperation and empathy. During the game, the leader acted as a facilitator, guiding groups or pairs of participants through the tasks.

During the workshops, students responded in diverse ways, consistent with their individual sensory needs. Many showed great interest in the topic, eagerly listening, and shared their own experiences. Some students demonstrated a noticeable sense of relief and greater understanding of their own difficulties, especially when specific examples of everyday situations were discussed. During the practical exercises, especially the movement and calming exercises, most students actively engaged, although some needed more time to adapt or chose a more relaxed approach.

As the workshops progressed, a sense of safety and openness within the group increased. Students were increasingly willing to use the suggested self-regulation strategies and better understood their reactions, which contributed to their greater comfort and engagement in the activities.





RESULTS AND IMPACT

The workshops allowed students to better understand their own responses to stimuli and ways to cope with overstimulation or understimulation. Participants, by using games, learned practical self-regulation techniques, such as movement exercises, breathing exercises, and calming strategies. It was noted that a well-adapted environment and a clear class structure fostered a greater sense of safety and concentration. The workshops also demonstrated the importance of an individualized approach to students' needs and enabling them to utilize their own sensory regulation methods. The workshops contributed to increased awareness, improved group functioning, and greater comfort in school situations.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Students (both healthy and those with SPD) function better in a predictable, structured environment.
- Excessive stimuli reduce concentration and increase tension.
- Diverse work formats promote engagement for all students.
- Students with SPD require more frequent breaks and individualized instruction.
- Group collaboration and integration improve learning comfort.
- Introduce a clear class structure and consistent routines.
- Reduce unnecessary stimuli (noise, visual chaos).
- Provide movement breaks and sensory activities for everyone.
- Individualize requirements and work methods.
- Equip students with self-regulation strategies (e.g., calming techniques).
- Strengthen relationships and an atmosphere of acceptance in the classroom.