

Resources for Interoceptive Sensory Systems

Interoceptive Sensory System

A resource booklet



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What is the Interoceptive Sensory System?

Interoception is the sense that helps us notice and understand what's happening inside our body.

It tells us about:

- Hunger & thirst
- Needing the toilet
- Temperature
- Tiredness
- Pain
- Emotions (butterflies, tight chest, racing heart)

This system helps children answer questions like:

- "How does my body feel?"
- "What do I need right now?"

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How Interoceptive Differences May Look in Autistic & SEN Children

Children may:

- Not notice hunger or thirst
- Struggle with toileting awareness
- Seem unaware of pain or temperature
- Have sudden emotional outbursts
- Find it hard to name or understand feelings

Often the body feels the emotion first, before the brain can make sense of it.

Why Interoception Matters

Interoception is key for:

- Emotional regulation
- Self-care skills
- Understanding feelings
- Recognising needs

When interoception is tricky, children may rely on adults to co-regulate and interpret their signals.

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Ways to Support Interoceptive Sensory Needs

Build Body Awareness

- Name sensations: “Your tummy looks tight”
- Use mirrors and visuals
- Model noticing your own body cues

Emotion & Body Mapping

- Draw where feelings show up in the body
- Use colour-coded body charts
- Pair emotions with physical sensations

Predictable Check-Ins

- Regular snack and drink times
- Toileting routines
- Movement and rest breaks

Regulation Tools

- Breathing games
- Stretching
- Quiet time
- Deep pressure (links with proprioception)

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Fun Ways to Support Interoceptive Sensory Awareness

Body Signal Colour Game

- Use a body outline
- Colour where different feelings show up (red = hot, blue = tired, green = calm)

Supports:

- Awareness of internal sensations
- Emotion-body connection

“How Does My Body Feel?” Check-In

- Use pictures or objects:
 - Soft = calm
 - Tight = worried
 - Heavy = tired

Supports:

- Language-free communication
- Choice and control

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Bubble Breathing

- Blow bubbles slowly and watch them float

Supports:

- Breathing awareness
- Calm regulation
- Fun, visual engagement

Teddy Check-Up

- Pretend to be a doctor and check teddy's body:
 - "Teddy's tummy feels rumble"
 - "Teddy's heart is beating fast"

Supports:

- Indirect learning
- Reduced pressure

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Move & Notice Game

- Do an activity (jumping, running)
- Pause and notice:
 - Heart beating
 - Breathing
 - Warm muscles

Supports:

- Body awareness
- Linking movement to sensation

Hot / Cold Detective

- Notice warmth after running
- Feel cool air on skin
- Hold warm mugs (safely)

Supports:

- Temperature awareness
- Internal body cues

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Emotion Charades (Body-First)

- Act out feelings using bodies, not faces
- Guess based on posture or movement

Supports:

- Physical expression of emotions
- Safe exploration

Sensory Check-In Box

- Choose an object that matches how their body feels:
 - Heavy stone = tired
 - Squishy ball = overwhelmed

Supports:

- Non-verbal communication
- Self-advocacy

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Nature Body Scan

- Lie on the ground outdoors
- Name or notice:
 - Heart
 - Breath
 - Muscles
 - Temperature

Supports:

- Grounding
- Calm connection with nature

Hunger & Thirst Detective

- Use visuals:
 - Empty tummy
 - Full tummy
 - Thirsty mouth

Supports:

- Self-care awareness
- Routine building

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Rest vs Ready Sorting Game

- Sort picture cards into:
 - “My body needs rest”
 - “My body is ready to move”

Supports:

- Recognising internal states
- Transition support

Music & Body Feelings

- Play different types of music
- Notice:
 - Fast heart
 - Slow breathing
 - Tension vs relaxation

Supports:

- Linking sensory input to body response