

TRUST-BASED RELATIONAL INTERVENTION® (TBRI)®

TRAUMA-INFORMED ENVIRONMENTS

Creating an environment that supports regulation and meets sensory needs is part of the *Ecological Strategies* of the TBRI Empowering Principles. The way a space is designed affects how people feel in that space. When designing a trauma-informed environment, consider the three pillars of trauma-informed care: felt-safety, connection, and regulation. Ask yourself: How is the environment creating predictability and helping people feel safe? How is the environment encouraging healthy connection? How is the environment impacting regulation? If you cannot change the design of a space, what tools can you provide to help people regulate?

This handout offers ideas for creating a sensory-rich and calming environment through a trauma-informed lens.

Sense	Keep in Mind	Examples	Secure Facilities
 Smell	• Avoid strong scents in main areas • Certain scents might be dysregulating • This can be a time to teach breathing strategies like square breathing	• Aroma sensory kit • Scented Play-Doh® • Scratch and sniff cards • Essential oils (cinnamon and vanilla are calming, peppermint and citrus are alerting)	• Avoid scented personal care products such as soap and toothpaste • Staff should avoid wearing perfume or cologne • Spray pillows with calming scents like lavender, jasmine, or sage • Use essential oils to rub on wrists
 Sound	• To reduce the echo in large rooms, incorporate soft furnishings, wall décor, and area rugs to help diffuse the sound • Music with higher beats per minute is alerting	• Headphones (over the ear) for music • Noise-canceling headphones • Radio/stereo • Sound machine • Quiet/calming areas	• Certain sounds may be triggering for individuals • Ensure that there is an area available with minimal noise where youth can regulate • Consider using acoustic panels or sound absorbing panels
 Proprioception	• Consider safety with items chosen to meet proprioception needs like weight minimums for weighted items • Establish clear guidelines and boundaries on how to use these tools	• Velcro straps • Stress balls • Tangles • Foot fidget • Weighted blankets • Weighted animals • Weighted vests	• Incorporate activities like wall push-ups and assisted push-pull activities • Have handprints painted on walls to assist with orientation and directions • Try nylon body socks

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Senses



Sight

- Minimize visual clutter to reduce sensory overload
- Bright colors are alerting, and soft colors are calming
- Consider offering sunglasses to dim lights

- Soft play triple mirror
- Color wall washer
- Feelings posters
- Inspirational quotes
- Calming paint colors such as soft blue or light purple
- Dimmable lights

Secure Facilities

- Consider using art decals or stickers that can be easily removed
- Instead of posters or hanging art, paint and draw on the walls
- Avoid industrial wall paint tones such as grays and browns



Touch

- Offer a variety of textures to meet a diverse range of sensory needs
- This can include smooth or textured objects, and soft fabrics

- Carpet tiles
- Fuzzy carpet
- Rainbow river stones
- Tactile playmat
- Sensory mat
- Neck pillows
- Soft blankets

- Color-changing sensory mats
- Choose objects that cannot be weaponized and do not pose a security risk. For instance, avoid items with springs
- Avoid fidget spinners



Vestibular

- Introduce activities gradually and gently, especially for those sensitive to movement

- Rocking chairs
- T-stool
- Tent
- Trampoline
- Swings
- Tackle ball
- Bean bags
- Egg chairs

- Rocking chairs attached with weighted item to avoid being used as a weapon
- Gaming chairs that are closer to the ground
- Medicine balls

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Senses

Suggestions



Smell



Aroma Sensory Kit



Scented Play-Doh®



Scented Pillow Spray



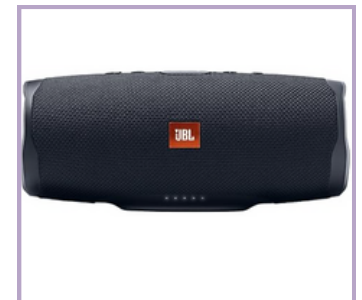
Sound



Noise Reduction Headphones



Sound Machine



Radio/Bluetooth



Proprioception



Weighted Animal



Body Glove



Weighted Vest

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Senses

Suggestions



Sight



Feelings Poster



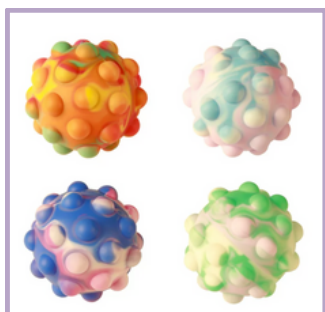
Color Wall Washer



Dimmable Light



Touch



Fidget Ball Popper



Sensory Mats



Tactile Playmat



Vestibular



Gaming Chair



Trampoline



Rocking Chair