

# Ten 10 Minute Sensory-Based Connecting Activities- Tweens/ Teens &-----



Hi- We're Playwell Collective community-based OT in Fresno, Ca. We help families develop compassion and connection with their neurodivergent kids. Sensory health is an important part of health for neurodivergent individuals. By providing regular "sensory nourishment" you can help your child develop a wider window of tolerance for other life challenges, social connection and burnout recovery. Let's get curious together and meet our kids with what they need to grow where they are.

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## A note about Sensory Processing

Everyone experiences sensory information in slightly different ways. Many neurodivergent people experience hyper or hypo sensitivities to sensory information that make day to day life different, and sometimes challenging or overwhelming. When our sensory needs are met, only then are we available for higher level learning and thinking. An OT can help you discover more about sensory processing patterns.

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## Decor Amor

Have your tween/teen re-design their room layout. Move the furniture together into the new layout.

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## Workout Flopout

Choose a park to visit that has an exercise circuit. Purposefully use the equipment in slightly wrong ways. Let your tween/teen help correct your technique.

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# Teen Chef

Have your tween/teen give you directions to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Follow the directions word for word while they record a video of you. Tons of laughter is sure to follow. Serve them the sandwich complete with napkin and silverware.

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# Playlist Power

Ask your tween/teen to play you their top 5 songs on their current playlist and choose the ideal volume level on your next drive together. Dance, sing, and get silly together. See if you can make another driver laugh at you at a stoplight.

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# Story Bot

Use a voice changer app or filter to retell the story of the day you first met your child (birth or first meeting). Record and send it to them in a text message.

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# Eye am Funny

Collaborate with your tween/teen to prank another family member with googly eyes. Put the eyes on another family member's toothpaste, milk or orange juice.

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# Prime Slime

Surprise your tween/teen with a pantry-based slime recipe. Try several and rate them together.

- Ooblek= 1 1/2 C. cornstarch + 1 C. water
- Smooth Dough= 2:1 cornstarch + lotion
- Moon Dust= 1:1 cornstarch + shaving cream
- Edible sweet slime= 2 3/4 C. powdered sugar + 1 C. frosting

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# Gamer-Bal X

Use your couch cushions as balance pads. Stand on them while playing a video game alongside your teen. See who can maintain their balance the longest while playing the game of your tween/teen's choice.

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# Sheet Hangout

Use a bedroom sheet to tie around a table to create a hammock space under the table. Walk by and give your tween/teen a little push if every now and then if they so desire

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# Sensory CHARCUTERIE

Create a snack tray with all crunchy or chewy foods. Work together to develop the "menu".

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# Taste/Smell

## HYPERsensitive

- stick to very specific safe foods
- rigid eating patterns
- particular aversions based on smell or texture
- comments on smells, notices more than others

## HYPOsensitive

- crave high intensity flavor foods- super salty or spicy
- loves scented lotions, chapstick
- licks or mouths objects often

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# Hearing

## HYPERsensitive

- covers ears, becomes overwhelmed in loud environments
- notices background sounds more than others
- fear of loud noises such as hand drier, toilet flush, hair dryer, vacuum

## HYPOsensitive

- prefers loud music and TV
- creates own sounds
- seems oblivious, takes a lot of effort to respond to name or directions
- Difficulty discriminating sounds

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# Touch/Tactile

## HYPERsensitive

- bothered by seams and tags in clothing
- dislikes hair brushing, nail clipping
- interprets light touch as painful or uncomfortable
- prefers to initiate hugs, not a big snuggler
- Very particular about food textures

## HYPOsensitive

- always touching/feeling
- high pain tolerance
- prefers to be barefoot
- doesn't notice when hands or face are messy
- stuffs food
- difficulty with tasks out of direct vision

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# Vision

## HYPERsensitive

- bothered by florescent lights or direct sun
- avoids visually busy environments
- rubs eyes often
- increased effort with visual tasks- reading, copying may cause headaches or eye strain

## HYPOsensitive

- seeks spinning or moving objects
- seeks high intensity games and TV shows
- visual- spatial challenges with legos, puzzles, beads
- challenges with organization

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# Proprioception

## HYPERsensitivity

- heightened body awareness and athletic abilities
- Able to assume advanced body postures on the first try (like in yoga)

## HYPOsensitive

- always climbing, jumping, wrestling
- may be overly rough "bull in china shop"
- walks with heavy gait, or extra bouncy on tip toes
- likes compression or heavy garments, blankets even when hot
- Chewing on non-food items

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# Vestibular

## HYPERsensitivity

- distressed by feet off the ground
- avoids movement equipment- slides and swings
- gets car sick easily
- doesn't like head to be tilted for hair washing

## HYPOsensitive

- loves fast moving play- spinning, swinging, jumping
- rocks or creates own movement when sitting
- has difficulty with seated work- slumps/ leans
- likes amusement park rides

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# Interoception

## HYPERsensitivity

- heightened pain sensitivity
- heightened sensitivity to temperature
- frequent aches and pains

## HYPOsensitive

- needs reminders to eat, drink, use restroom
- does not feel hungry or thirsty until almost emergency
- difficulty with emotion + body sensation connection

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