




Sensory Based Interventions and Calming Rooms

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By the end of this session
participants will be able to:

- Describe the Alerting and Calming Properties of the Sensory Systems
- Describe Basic Sensory Based Interventions
- Discuss Benefits of Calming Rooms and Sensory Based Interventions
- Discuss how Sensory Based Interventions are Part of the Recovery Model

Imagine...



- You are stressed out at your group home, crisis care or day treatment program. The options offered to you to help you calm down are: medications, your room or “leave group”.

However, ideally in your mind...

- You know the best way for you to relax is to get into bed, pull all the covers up and listen to your favorite CD.



Sensory Based Interventions

- Occupational Therapy (OT) has always striven to provide patient centered care.
- Trauma Informed Care includes using sensory based interventions to focus on the individual needs of the consumer.
- OT has long recognized the importance of holistic interventions and the connection between the person and their environment which is also an important aspect of Trauma Informed Care.
- Sensory based interventions help the process of self-organization through information gained through our senses.
- Sensory based interventions help consumers to proactively self-regulate their emotions and impulses to reduce the potential for seclusion and restraint.

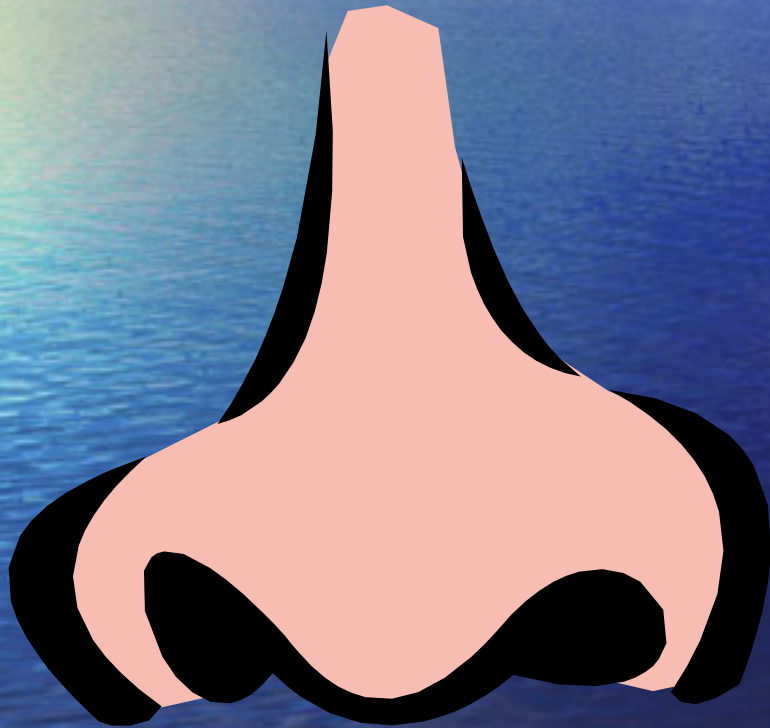
Seclusion and Restraint

- “They [sensory based interventions] expand the range of therapeutic interventions available and are useful in avoiding or resolving crisis situations that could lead to seclusion and restraint.” (Champagne & Stromberg, 2004)
- “The use of the multisensory room and sensory-based approaches demonstrated clear benefit to the majority of consumers in reducing self-reported levels of distress.” (Champagne & Sayer, 2003)

Our Senses

- Smell
- Taste
- Oral Motor
- Vision
- Auditory
- Touch
- Proprioception
- Vestibular

Smell Sensations



- Alerting:
 - Strong perfume, lemon or mint scents, and noxious body odor.
- Calming:
 - Vanilla scents, lavender lotion, and an aromatherapy machine

Taste Sensations

- Calming:
 - Chocolate, hot tea, and warm chicken noodle soup.
- Alerting:
 - Fire ball candies, sour jelly beans, hot salsa, and spicy chips.



Oral Motor Sensations



- Calming:
 - Hard candy, milk shakes, and slices of banana.
- Alerting:
 - Pretzels, popcorn, and carrots.

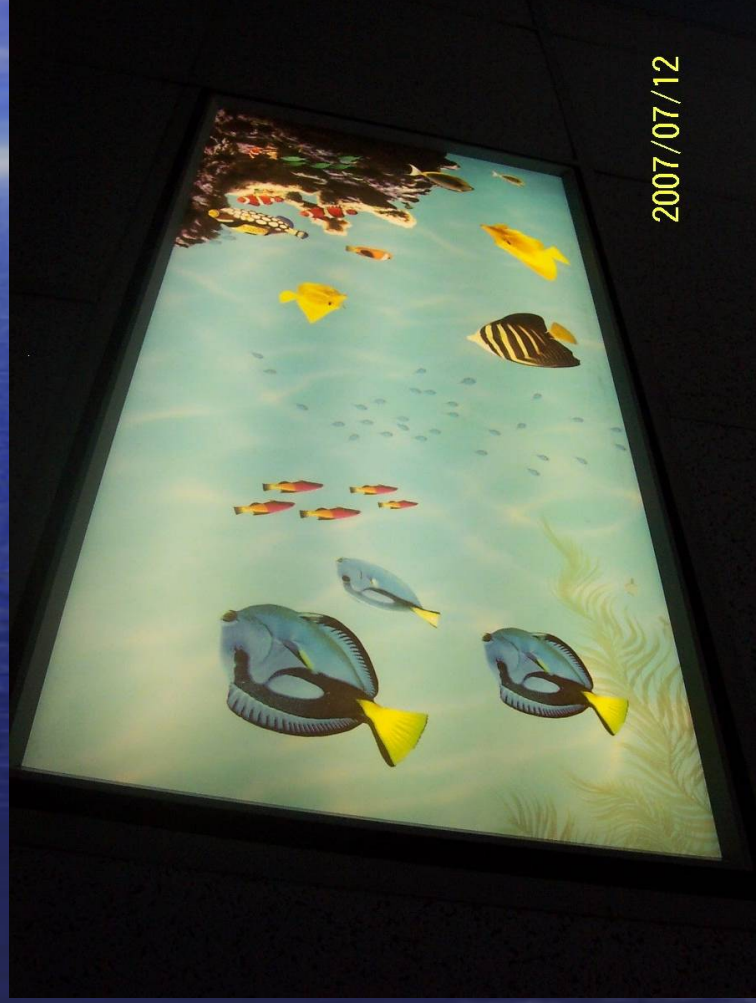
Visual Sensations

- Calming:
 - Serene murals, pastel colors, watching fish in an aquarium, and soft lighting.
- Alerting:
 - Modern art, bright colors, and music videos.





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Auditory Sensations



- Calming:
 - Soft music, ocean or waterfall sounds, and meditation tapes.
- Alerting:
 - Loud and quick paced (rock) music, noise in the milieu, fire alarms, and blue lights.



Touch Sensations

- Alerting (light touch):
 - Tickling, fiddling with a koosh ball, or a bug crawling on you.
- Calming (deep pressure):
 - Using a weighted blanket or shawl, sitting in a bean bag chair, and squeezing a stress ball.



Weighted Modalities

- Weighted blankets, weighted shawls and bean bag chairs provide the consumer with input (deep pressure) and awareness about their bodies which helps them to regulate their arousal level and calm down.
- Weighted items offer the sensation of physical holding and containment and may facilitate self-organization when an individual's capacities are tenuous. (Champagne and Stromberg, 2004)
- Prior to use of a weighted blanket, precautions and a protocol for use should be considered.



Proprioceptive Sensations



- Definition: Perception of joint and body movement and how much force we are using. (Moore, 2005)
- Calming:
 - Weight lifting, Yoga, Tai Chi, bean bag tapping, and walking, and “heavy work.”
- Alerting:
 - Jogging, step aerobics, and jumping jacks.

Vestibular Sensations

- Definition: The internal ear contains receptors that act as an internal compass and signals changes in head position and motion. (Moore, 2005)
- Calming:
 - Rocking in a rocking chair/ glider, swinging gently, and slow head roles.
- Alerting:
 - Roller coaster, spinning quickly, and moving around on a therapy ball.



Environmental Considerations

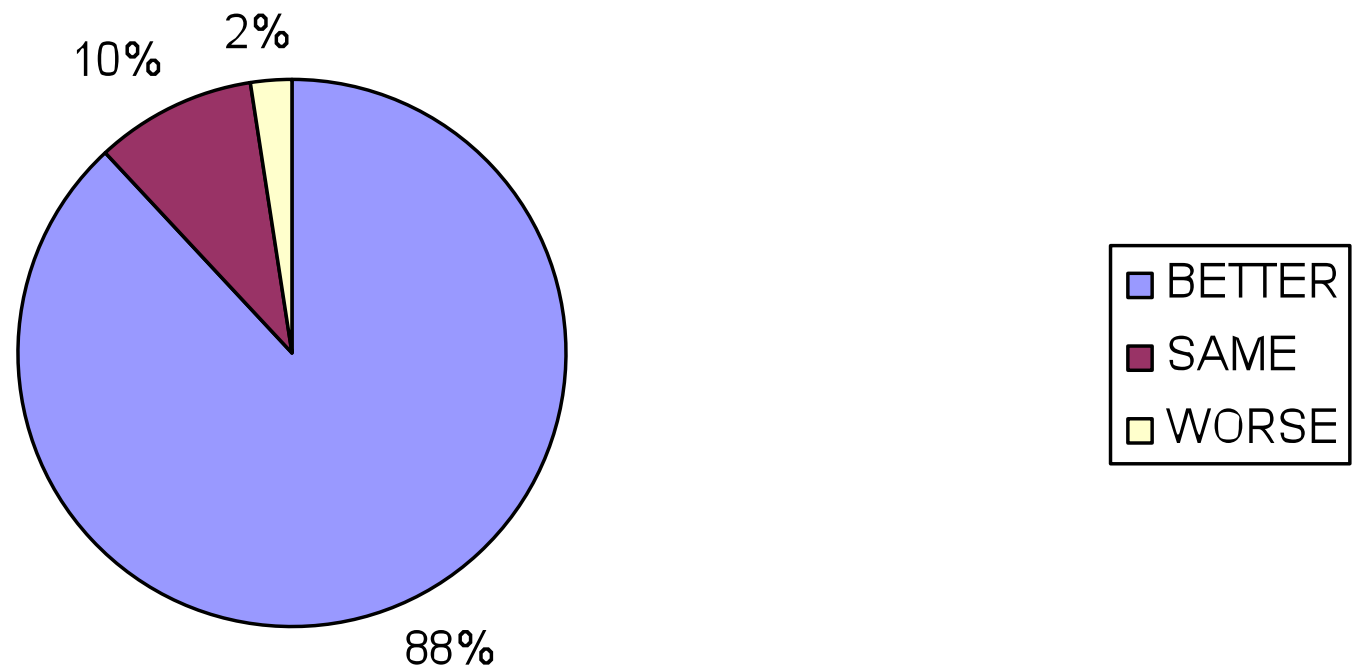
- Utilize room sprays/plug-ins: smell
- Provide warm milk/hot tea for insomnia: taste
- Provide sugar-free gum/candies: oral motor
- Reduce clutter & add soothing pictures: vision
- Provide relaxing CDs for background or individual use: auditory
- Provide bins of stress and various tactile balls: touch
- Engage consumers in heavy work activities: proprioception
- Provide a rocker/glider for consumer use: vestibular

Integrating Sensory Based Interventions

- Based upon the calming and alerting properties of our sensory systems and current literature, we developed five Calming Rooms on each consumer unit at NVMHI with interventions such as: rocking chairs, bean bags, weighted blankets, weighted shawls, bean bag chairs, koosh balls, stress balls, journals, clay, yoga mats, aromatherapy fans, relaxing music, and scented lotion.
- If space is an issue, portable kits of sensory supplies or a “sensory corner” can also be made to use with consumers.
- When ordering items it is important to consider both the aesthetic point of view and the risk management point of view.



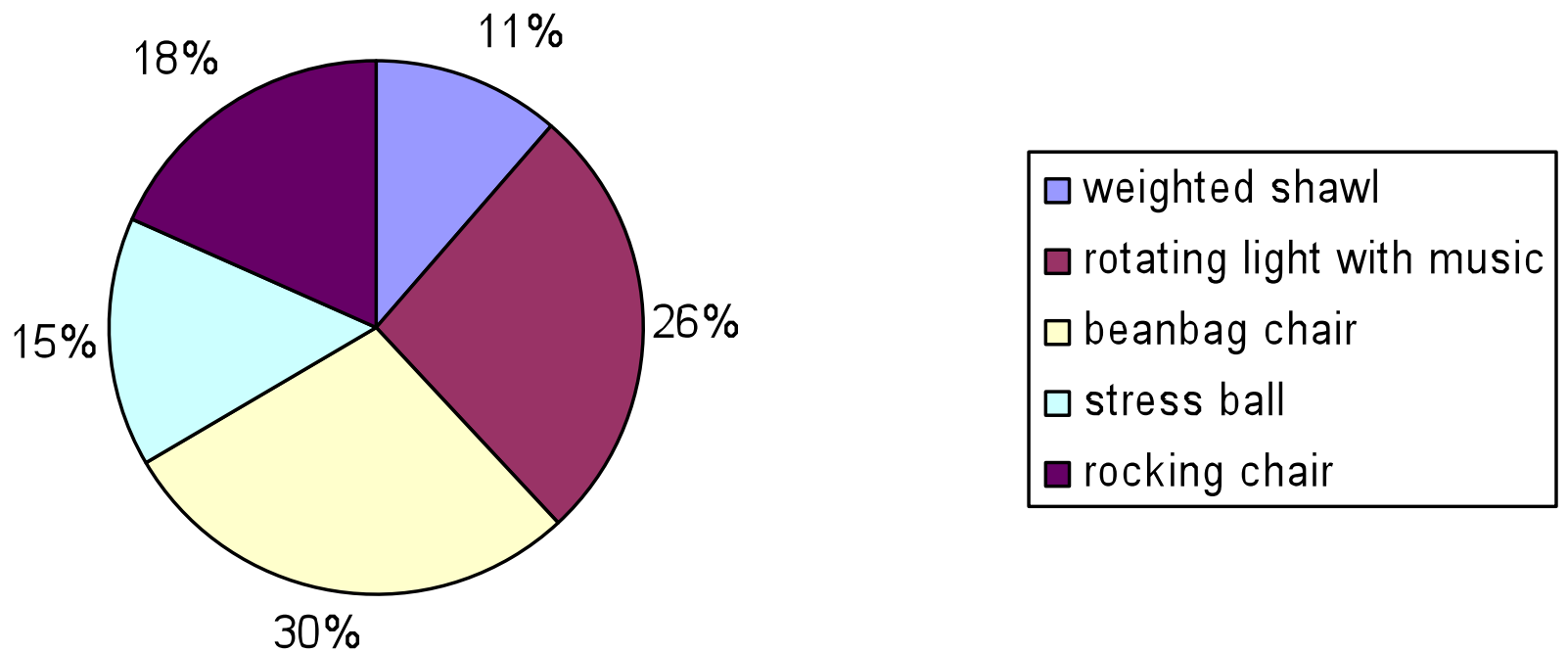
How Do you feel After Using the Calming Room?



Tara Hallen, MA

PI Coordinator at NVMHI

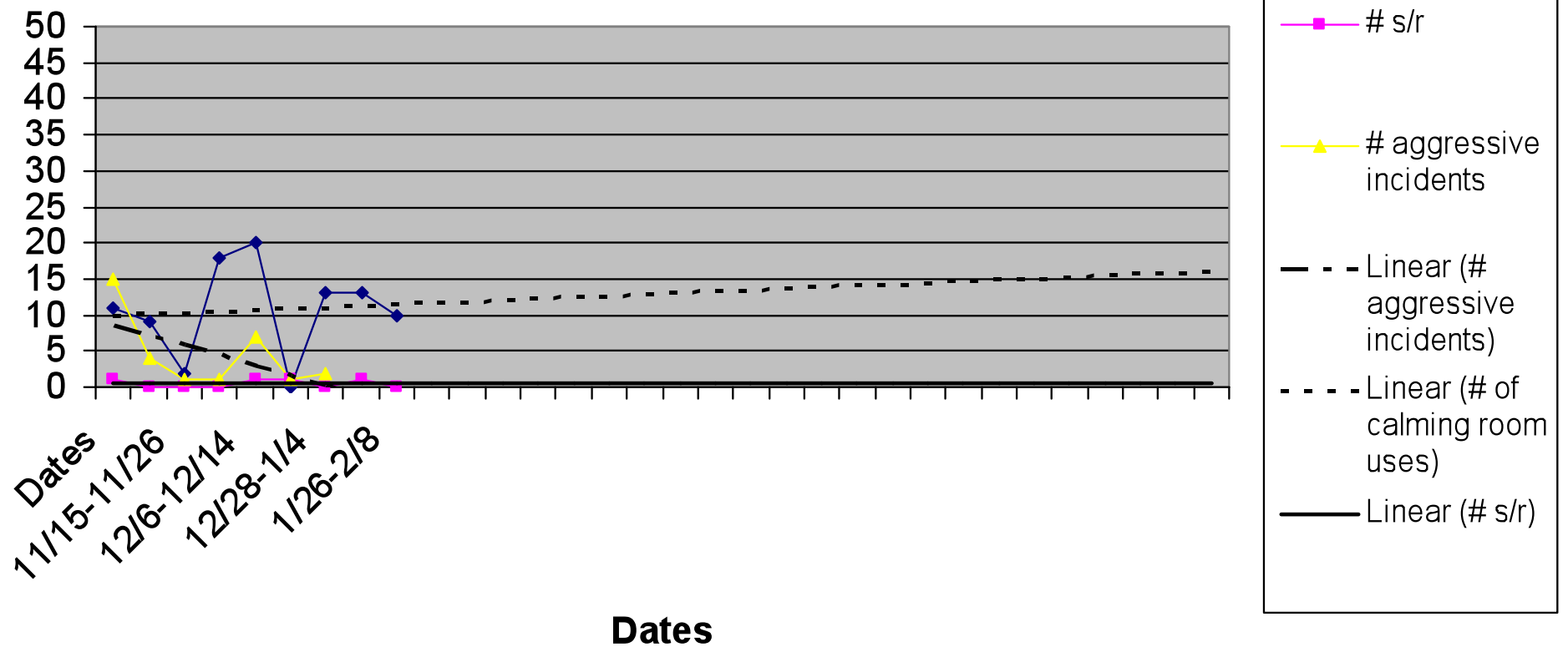
Which Calming Room Options do you Like Best?



Tara Hallen, MA

PI Coordinator at NVMHI

F-1 Calming Room Effectiveness

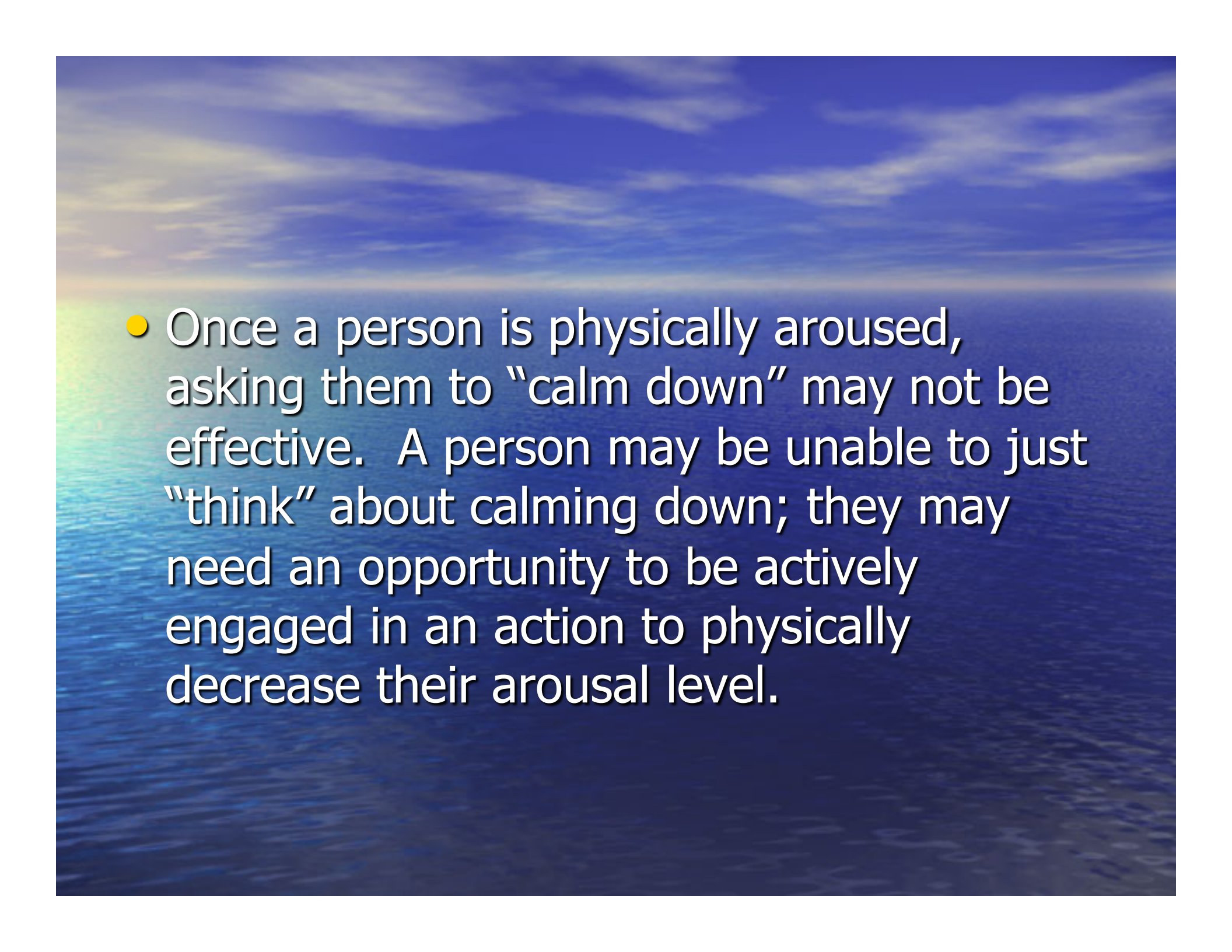


Tara Hallen, MA

PI Coordinator at NVMHI

How do we use this Information?

- “Sensory stimulation has the potential to help people in ways that talk therapy and medication may not, using other portals to achieve self-soothing, understanding, and relief of symptoms.” (Adkinson, 2007)
- Therapy and medications will always be an important part of an individual’s treatment, however we see sensory interventions as an additional treatment tool for an individual to use on the path towards Recovery.

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- Once a person is physically aroused, asking them to “calm down” may not be effective. A person may be unable to just “think” about calming down; they may need an opportunity to be actively engaged in an action to physically decrease their arousal level.

Current Literature

- “Patients who are hallucinating, suicidal, depressed, extremely agitated, or otherwise losing control over their responses can come to the ... [Calming Room] and chose something soothing [like the bean bag] chair, or the weighted blanket. A peaceful CD or a weighted shawl that feels like a shoulder massage.” (Freyer, 2007)

Consumer Input



- Consumers should be invited to participate in choosing room color, mural, and supplies to have available in the Sensory Rooms, Sensory Kits or Sensory Corners.
- Consumers should be involved in developing etiquette for the use of the Sensory interventions.
- Continual feedback from consumers to keep interventions relevant as your population changes.

Benefits of Sensory Based Interventions

- “The use of the [sensory based interventions] in acute care in-patient mental health care settings has been a great success and readily endorsed by the MA State Department of Mental Health and JCAHO during several recent hospital surveys.” (Champagne 2007)

Further Benefits...

- As mental health workers the more we “do with” our consumers the less we have to “do to” our consumers.



How Can I Incorporate Sensory Interventions into My Practice Setting?

- Orientation for new consumers
- Community meeting reminders
- 1:1 interactions with consumers
- Discussions during groups
- Provide groups with sensory kits or in the Sensory room/corner.
- Incorporate into WRAP or Crisis plans

How to Implement Sensory Interventions


- Discuss with consumers their triggers, emotional responses or behaviors that might lead to a personal crisis which could be avoided with the use of sensory interventions.
- Encourage consumers who have used the sensory interventions to share with others what they found most helpful and plan to use in the future.
- Help consumers develop their own sensory kit or “toolbox.”

Special Considerations

- These interventions are most successful when consumers or staff observe **INITIAL** symptoms of agitation, anxiety, restlessness, etc.
- Remember to also use the alerting aspect of the sensory systems for consumers that may be depressed or feeling sleepy as they are adjusting to their medications.

Recovery

- Sensory interventions empower the consumer to make choices about their treatment.
- Sensory interventions provide the consumer with more alternatives and opportunities to self-soothe.
- Sensory interventions engage consumers in productive coping methods.
- Sensory Rooms/Corners and Sensory Kits encourage personal growth through “sensory” skill building.
- Sensory Rooms/Corners and Sensory kits provide a nurturing and healing environment.

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- “The creation and use of person-centered and trauma-informed tools, such as multisensory environments, improve care and promote a recovery focus.” (Champagne & Stromberg, 2004)

Resources

- Adkison, L. (2007). Understanding sensory stimulation. Retrieved on January 8th, 2007, from <http://www.mclean.harvard.edu/employment/nursing/uss.php>
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