Building your Toolbox: BEST Strategies that Strengthen Psychological Safety

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Sensory Workshops

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B Body Strategies

How does the learner's body tell you what they need?

Some kids move a lot—they jump, crash, or spin. Others may seem low-energy or avoid movement. Pay attention to what they naturally enjoy—these activities are often self-regulating.

Try incorporating "power senses" activities:

- Vestibular (movement + balance): spinning, jumping, dancing, obstacle courses
- Proprioception (muscle + joint input): tug-of-war, pushing/ lifting/ carrying supplies
- Deep pressure: bear hugs, "push-the-wall away" activity, self-hugs

School Friendly Examples: obstacle courses, transition using animal walks, or helping with setup tasks (e.g., moving chairs or books, helping 'push' the lunch trolley

E Emotional Strategies

When a learner is having a hard time, be curious and ask yourself:

"What might they be trying to tell me with their behavior?"

Some learners don't yet have the words for sensory overload, anxiety, or big emotions. Their behavior is communication.

Co-regulation tip: Stay calm and connected. Your energy can either help settle or escalate the moment.

Model simple emotional regulation strategies:

- Deep breathing together ("Smell the flower, blow out the candle")
- Quiet moments in a calm space
- Supportive scripts like:

"We've got this."
"Let's figure it out together."

S Sensory Strategies

What sensory input calms or overwhelms this learner?

Sensitivities to sound, touch, light, or smells can really impact a learner's experience. Stay observant and adjust where needed.

Build in sensory-friendly tools and spaces:

- Access to a quiet "chill zone" or tent (and a way for the child to request it)
- Access to noise-cancelling headphones during
- Access to sunglasses and hats for outside
- Access to fidget tools during sit-down times like circle or crafts

Watch for patterns:

- Overload often happens before or after transitions, group activities, or mealtimes
- Use a "Body" activity such as a movement break before transitions to help regulation
- Give time and space for the child to reset

Advocate! Let others know what works best for the learner.

T Thinking Strategies

Predictability and Routines= Psychological Safety

Visuals and routines help children feel more confident and reduce anxiety.

Use tools like:

- Picture or written schedules
- Visual timers (sand timers, digital countdowns)
- Preview transitions: "After lunch, we're heading to the crafts room."
- Use transition songs

Predictability lowers stress.
Preparation builds trust.

Final Reminders for Creating Psychologically Safe Spaces:

- Stay curious—every child is unique
- Notice what's already working—and do more of it
- Be open to trying new strategies and tweaking as needed
- Your calm, flexible presence is the most powerful support a child can have!

Building Your Toolbox of Strategies

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Biology Comes First Principle



Behaviour is Communication!



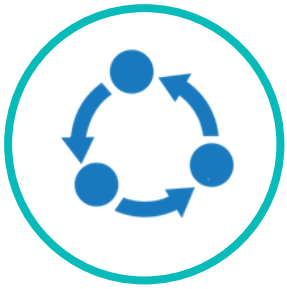
Psychologically Safe Spaces = Sensory Safe Spaces



Understand the Impact of Sensory Processing Differences



Add Predictability through Visuals and Routines



Understand the Impact of Chronic Stress on the Developing Brain



Invest in Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships (SSNRs)



Model the Use of Neurodiversity-Affirming Language



Embed Sensory Regulation Opportunities every day



Check your own Implicit Biases & Beliefs about Behaviours



Co-regulation FIRST!



Connection Before Compliance