Addressing Infant/Toddler Daily Living Skills with Sensorimotor Practices

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AOTA Board Certification in Pediatrics

www.SPDconnection.com
Learning Objectives

1. Learn to identify sensory processing patterns in infants and toddlers
2. Create simple sensory solutions using the *Infant Toddler Sensory Profile* processing pattern quadrants
3. Develop a repertoire of sensory strategies focusing on occupations of infants and toddlers; playing, eating, sleeping, bathing, dressing
Sensory Integration Theory

- A Frame of Reference developed by A. Jean Ayres, PhD, OTR which refers to the constructs that discuss how the brain processes sensation and the affects on motor skills, emotional responses, attention span and behavior.
Sensory Integration Definition

• “The organization of sensory input for use. The use may be a perception of the body or world, or an adaptive response, learning process, or development of some neural function.”  A. Jean Ayres, PhD, OTR, FAOTA

Sensory Integration and the Child
### SENSORY INTEGRATIVE PROCESSES

**THE SENSES**

**INTEGRATION OF THEIR INPUTS**

**END PRODUCTS**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Auditory (hearing)</th>
<th>speech</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vestibular (gravity and movement)</td>
<td>eye movements</td>
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<tr>
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<td>posture</td>
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<td>gravitational security</td>
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<td>Proprioceptive (muscles and joints)</td>
<td>body percept</td>
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<td>motor planning</td>
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<td>activity level</td>
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<td>visual perception</td>
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<td>Tactile (touch)</td>
<td>eye-hand coordination</td>
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<td>visual perception</td>
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<td>purposeful activity</td>
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<td>capacity for abstract thought and reasoning</td>
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<td>Visual (seeing)</td>
<td>ability to concentrate</td>
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<td>academic learning ability</td>
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The 4 A’s of Infancy

- Describes the way in which infants/toddlers perceive and modulate sensory information.
- 1. Arousal: The infant’s ability to maintain alertness and make transitions between different states of sleep & wakefulness.
- 2. Attention: The desire to focus selectively on a desired stimulus or task.
- 3. Affect: The emotional component of behavior.
- 4. Action: The ability to engage in adaptive goal-directed behavior.

Focusing Attention

- Organize toys
- Rotate toys
- Limit number of toys available at one time
- Use tent/refrigerator box/pile of pillows for enclosed space
- Engage child during their best alert period of the day
- Warm bath before bed
- Rock the child
- Heavy “jobs” (e.g. wiping table, putting cans away, lifting laundry basket)
Identifying Sensory Processing Disorder in Infants & Toddlers

- Observation
- Parent interview
- Checklist
- Occupational Therapy Evaluation
- Infant/Toddler Sensory Profile
Observation

• Level 1: Birth-12 months of age
• Level 2: 12-18 months of age
• Level 3: 18 months – 3 years of age
Parent Interview

• What is your child’s typical day like?
• What type of sensory activities does your child like/dislike?
• How does your child manage transitions?
• Is there a predictable time of day or type of activity when your child is most or least organized?
• Are your child’s self-care tasks limited by sensory or motor problems? (e.g. does not tolerate food textures, fearful during bathing)
• How does your child respond to affection/touch?
• Does your child enjoy playing with other children?
Infant/Toddler Symptom Checklist

• Is frequently fussy, difficulty calming.
• Wakes 3 or more times in the night.
• Requires extensive help to fall asleep.
• Is distressed by having face/hair washed.
• Resists cuddling.
• Is in constant motion.
• Craves upside down or swinging.
• Startles by loud sounds.
• Sensitive to bright lights.
• Anxious, difficulty separating from adult.
Infant/Toddler Sensory Profile

Winnie Dunn, Ph.D., OTR, FAOTA (2002)

- Birth – 6 months
- 7 – 36 months
- General Processing
- Auditory Processing
- Visual Processing
- Tactile Processing
- Vestibular Processing
- Oral Sensory Processing

- Quadrants:
  - 1. Low Registration
  - 2. Sensation Seeking
  - 3. Sensory Sensitivity
  - 4. Sensation Avoiding

- Low Threshold
- More than others
- Less than others
- Typical, Probable Difference, Definite Difference
Infant/Toddler Sensory Profile
Winnie Dunn, Ph.D., OTR, FAOTA (2002)

- Low Registration
  More than others’
- Notices things less than others
- Profits from more intensity

- Low Registration
  Less than others’
- Notices things more than others
- Profits from familiar surroundings
Infant/Toddler Sensory Profile

Winnie Dunn, Ph.D., OTR, FAOTA (2002)

- Sensation Seeking More than others’
- Enjoys sensory experiences
- Profits from more intensity

- Sensation Seeking Less than others’
- Does not seek additional input
- Profits from more variety
Infant/Toddler Sensory Profile

Winnie Dunn, Ph.D., OTR, FAOTA (2002)

- Sensory Sensitivity
  More than others'
  - Notices sensory input at a higher rate than others
  - Profits from familiar surroundings and organized input

- Sensory Sensitivity
  Less than others'
  - Not distracted or overwhelmed
  - Profits from experiences that increase awareness
Infant/Toddler Sensory Profile
Winnie Dunn, Ph.D., OTR, FAOTA (2002)

- Sensation Avoiding More than others’
- Notices and is bothered by things
- Profit from less sensory input available in environment

- Sensation Avoiding Less than others’
- Less likely to withdraw from stimuli
- Profit from more organized input
Case Example

- Girl - 2 yrs. 7 mo.
- Sensory Profile results 'More than others' Low Registration & Sensation Seeking
- Low muscle tone
- Decreased balance skills
- "W" sitting
- Delayed motor milestones
- Does not use pincer grasp, does not hold marker or imitate circular scribbles
- Delayed language/cognitive
- Decreased oral motor skills affecting feeding and articulation, drools
Case Example

- **Strategies**
- Sensory Play with rocking chair, swing, sit & spin, deep pressure touch activities - push toy cart, ride-on car, weighted doll, heavy “jobs”
- Oral motor games blow bubbles, blow toys, chewy snacks (raisins, licorice), nuk brush, vibration
- Tactile play with dough, tactile books, rice tub
- Magnadoodle/Crayola Color Wonders
- Shape sorters
- Ball games roll/toss/catch
- Walking on uneven surfaces around yard
Sensory Systems

- 1. Vestibular System
- 2. Proprioception System
- 3. Tactile System
- 4. Visual System
- 5. Auditory System
- 6. Olfactory System
- 7. Taste/Oral Tactile
Vestibular System Characteristics

- **Definition:** Structures in inner ear detect movement and changes in head position.
- Orients us in space, speed, direction.
- Linear=Calming/Organizing or Rotary=Alerting
- Over-responsive vs Under-responsive
- Vestibular input is cumulative
- Go both directions w/ rotary-stimulates all receptors.
- Avoid rotary input for child w/ seizure disorder
Vestibular System

Signs & Symptoms of Dysfunction:

- **Over-responsive:** Distressed when head is tipped for hair washing or diaper change, distressed by being swung in air, car sick, fearful of moving over changing surfaces (e.g. sidewalk to grass, carpet to wood floor).

- **Under-responsive:** Difficulty sitting still, craves upside down/swinging.

- Negative Responses from Rotary Input/Signs & Symptoms of Overload (ANS)
  - Physiological: nausea, headaches, excessive yawning or hicceping, irregular breathing, color change-face pallor, sweating, motor agitation, pupil dilation, significant changes in arousal level.
  - Behavioral: fussing, crying, grimacing, startling, stiffening, averting gaze, pushing away, arching back, staring into space.

- **If a child shows signs of distress, STOP, and engage in “heavy work” activity.**
Vestibular System
Simple Solutions

- **Low Registration:**
  - Place items in distant places so child moves around
  - Have child carry items to table for mealtime
  - Sit on cushion during meals
  - Rough and tumble play/upside down game
  - Child may not know own limits of safety
  - Use movement to arouse - bouncing, swing
Vestibular System
Simple Solutions

- **Sensation Seeking:**
- Place objects out of reach so child gets added input with climbing, crawling, transitions sit to stand etc.
- Have child help set table
- Roughhouse play
- Incorporate rocking into bedtime routine
- Car rides
Vestibular System
Simple Solutions

- **Sensory Sensitivity:**
  - Avoid alerting activity prior to bedtime
  - Rock child to sleep
  - Adult hold child firmly to chest when laying child down
  - Allow child to lay down in tub for hair washing – child’s body contact with tub will provide deep touch pressure and head will not have to tip (Use shallow water)

- **Sensory Avoiding:**
  - Pick one position for bathing and stick with it
  - Place toys and clothing in one place
  - Use high chair so movement is minimized during meal
  - Honor sedentary play…add movement from sitting in a methodical way
  - Use stroller with upright position
Proprioception System Characteristics

- **Definition**: Receptors in joints, muscles, and tendons perceive contraction, stretching and compression.
- Sometimes described as "Heavy Work" or "Deep Pressure Touch"
- Position sense: awareness of joint position
- Kinesthesia: awareness of movement
- Allows us to grade touch pressure
- Endorphins released from brain - calming/organizing
- Stays in nervous system 1 ½ - 2 hours
Proprioception System
Signs & Symptoms of Dysfunction

- Fine/Gross motor coordination delays
- Poor articulation
- Difficulty grading amount of pressure, for example: (Pets an animal too hard, “plops” during motor transitions, breaks crayons)
- Clumsy, poor body awareness in space
- Prefers strong hugs, tight fitting clothing
Proprioception
Simple Solutions

- Weighted Vest
- Snug underclothes/Neoprene pressure vest/swimsuit
- Swaddle in blanket
- Weighted lap bag (re-stuff plush animal with rice)
- Beanbag chair
- Naturally occurring “Heavy work” (e.g. pushing heavy toys, ride-on cars on carpet, carrying heavy boxes filled with toys)
Proprioception
Simple Solutions

• Hugs
• Swimming
• Playground - climbing
• Sandbox play
• Play sandwich game
• Infant massage
• Weighted blanket
• Weighted utensils
• Weighted cup
Tactile System Characteristics

- **Definition:** Cells (mechanoreceptors) in skin send info for light touch, pain, temperature (thermoreceptors), vibration, and pressure. More receptors in mouth and hands. Babies learn by mouthing objects.
- The “Back of Your Hand” (receptor density high & receptor field small)
- Protection=Alert to danger=Survival vs. Discrimination=Orienting to an object=What is it? Where is it?
- Cold, rough, light touch – Alerting
- Warm, soft, deep pressure touch – Calming
- Information stays in nervous system 1 ½ - 2 hours
Tactile System

Signs & Symptoms of Dysfunction

• **Over-responsive**: Tactile defensiveness, sensitivity to finger foods, tags in clothes, distressed when clothes are removed, distressed when having hair/face washed, resists cuddling, dislikes messy play, does not tolerate haircuts/nail cutting.

• **Under-responsive**: High pain tolerance, excessive touching of people, hands constantly “fidgeting”, enjoys highly textured objects.
Tactile System
Simple Solutions

- Low registration:
- Use rough textured wash clothes and towels
- Rub lotion on prior to dressing
- Use textured socks, shirts etc.
- Provide variety of food textures and temperatures
- Play with textured toys and on textured surfaces
Tactile System
Simple Solutions

- Sensation Seeking:
- Pet an animal
- Splash water in tub
- Add accessories to clothing (belts, hats, sequins)
- Barefoot on textured surfaces
- Textured blankets
Tactile System
Simple Solutions

- **Sensory Sensitivity:**
  - Warn your child when touch may occur as often as possible
  - Massage scalp prior to haircut/soak nails & compress nail bed
  - T-shirt sheets on bed
  - Tag-less clothing, seem-less socks
  - Use neutral warmth such as warm bath prior to dressing, provide brisk towel rubs to desensitize prior to dressing.

- **Sensation Avoiding:**
  - Press firmly on large surfaces of child’s body when washing
  - Do not rub on skin – only press
  - Warm wipes prior to use
  - Consistent temperature and textures in foods
  - Coated utensils
  - Play area with space away from other children
Visual System Characteristics

- **Definition:**
- **Acuity** (focusing mechanism)
- **Ocular motor** (Eye muscles – tracking/converge)
- **Visual motor** (Eye-hand coordination)
- **Visual perception** (Interpretation – includes visual discrimination, visual memory, visual figure-ground, visual closure, visual spatial relationships)

- Has neuronal connections to vestibular system (example: baby rolling)
- Vestibulo-Ocular reflex
Visual System
Signs & Symptoms of Dysfunction

- **Over-responsive**: Visual defensive (sensitive to fluorescent lights, bothered by objects close to face such as an approaching ball).
- **Visual Discrimination**: Difficulty focusing on books, difficulty with insert puzzles
- **Under-responsive**: Responds best to high contrast, bright colors - otherwise does not notice detail.
- Poor ball skills
Visual System
Simple Solutions

- Low registration:
- Colored soap crayons in bathtub
- Select bright clothing
- Contrasting food colors
- Mirrors at floor level
- Visual photo schedule - Toddler
- Turn on bright lights
Visual System
Simple Solutions

• Sensation Seeking:
• Sort toys by color
• Put up posters, pictures at eye level
• Use contrasting plate color so food shows
• Leave night light on
• Brightly colored toys
Visual System
Simple Solutions

- Sensory Sensitivity:
- Use natural lighting
- Sunglasses for toddlers
- Dim lights for calming
- Fisher Price Ocean Wonders Aquarium
Visual System
Simple Solutions

- Sensation Avoiding:
  - Remove toys from bath
  - Pull shades in brightly lit rooms
  - One food at a time on plate
  - Keep play area uncluttered
  - Play with one toy at a time
  - Create blinders on the stroller/Use window tint on car
Auditory System

Characteristics

• Definition: Hearing, auditory processing (misinterprets instructions), discriminating between sounds for phonics, auditory figure-ground for attention, auditory defensive.

• Has connections to vestibular system due to anatomical proximity.

• Decibel reference: Conversation sound level occurs at 60 decibels
Auditory System
Signs & Symptoms of Dysfunction

♦ **Over-Responsive**: Auditory Defensive (covers ears to loud sounds)

♦ **Auditory Discrimination**: Distracted by background noise (auditory figure-ground), poor attention in busy environments, difficulty discerning variations in speech sounds.

♦ **Under-Responsive**: Oblivious to being spoken to, history of ear infections/allergies, delayed speech/language skills. *Rule out Hearing Impairment.

♦ > 85 dB: Movie theatre, circus, sporting events, carnival, car race, restaurant, birthday party.
Auditory System
Simple Solutions

- **Low Registration:**
- Lively music in background
- Talk about what you/child are doing as you are doing it
- Point out sounds you hear when playing outside
- Provide toys that make sounds
Auditory System
Simple Solutions

- Sensation Seeking:
- Create a bath time song that can be changed across time
- Pick out a new CD to play each day
- Hum/sing to songs/make them up
- Play music during mealtime
Auditory System
Simple Solutions

• **Sensory Sensitivity:**
  - Incorporate rhythmical music (60 beats per min. = heart organizing to NS)
  - Use soft music to calm & focus at mealtime or bedtime.
  - Use hat, ski cap, earmuffs to muffle sound
  - Find alternative ways to celebrate holidays (4th of July, birthday party (be 1st to arrive), Christmas, Halloween)
  - [www.Route2Greatness.com](http://www.Route2Greatness.com)

• **Sensation Avoiding:**
  - Respect child’s sensitivity to loud sound (e.g. allow child to go to another room when vacuuming, remind child to cover ears when flushing the toilet, run bath water with child in another room)
  - Use fan in bedroom to create white background noise
  - Find closed in/quiet places for the child to play
  - Attend outings during non-peak hours Choose community outings with quiet surroundings (e.g. library)
  - Turn off radio, TV, close windows
Toilet Flush Song

www.route2greatness.com
Auditory System
Simple Solutions

- Poor Auditory Discrimination:
- Simplify language, slower rate
- Give one direction at a time
- Pair directions with physical/visual prompts
- Allow longer response time
- Stand close to child when speaking
Olfactory System Characteristics

• **Definition:** Chemical receptors located in the nasal structure allow us to smell and discriminate between various smells.
• Have direct neuronal connections to limbic system responsible for emotional memory.
• Discrimination: What is that smell? Vs.
• Protection: Exp. Sour milk, burning smell
• We have 1,000 olfactory odor receptor cells that register 10,000 different smells! (Nobel prize Oct. 2004 - 2 individuals each discovered)
• “Man’s Best Friend” - A dog’s sense of smell can save lives! [www.heavenscentpaws.com](http://www.heavenscentpaws.com)
Olfactory System

Signs & Symptoms of Dysfunction

- **Over-responsive**: Aversive reactions to typical smells, loss of appetite, headaches, limited diet.

- **Under-responsive**: Frequently sniffs non-food objects.
Olfactory System
Simple Solutions

- **Low Registration:**
  - Peppermint and Citrus are alerting
  - Use scented bath soaps
  - Add new aromas with natural air fresheners
  - Adult Use spritzer scents on clothes before picking up child
  - Adult use scented lotions on hands
  - Clean toys with scented cleaners

- **Sensation Seeking:**
  - Ask child to guess what food is by smell
  - Use edible play dough or finger paints
  - Spritz pillow with calming scent
  - Have scented lotions available for child to use
Olfactory System
Simple Solutions

• **Sensory Sensitivity:**
  • Chamomile/vanilla scents are calming
  • Use scent-free laundry detergent
  • Adults do not wear perfumes

• **Sensation Avoiding:**
  • Use unscented lotions/soaps
  • Remove air fresheners
  • Provide a predictable set of foods for mealtimes
  • Use unscented cleaners in house
  • Do not enter store aisles with detergents

• **For negative response to scents:** Smell cinnamon, cloves or coffee bean. (Exp. cinnamon gum, cinnamon stick, cinnamon lip balm)
Taste/Oral Tactile Characteristics

• **Definition**: Chemical receptors on the tongue allow us to taste: sweet, sour, salty, bitter and perceive textures: soft, hard, crunchy, gummy, sticky, chewy.

• 1 in 4 people are “Supertasters”, born with extra taste buds (papillae). (veggies bitter/hate textures, more burn from chili pepper, perceive more sweetness)

• Non-Tasters = quarter of population

• Everyone else in-between

• Training Taste buds: Pair a bite of a sweet vegetable with a bite of a bitter vegetable and trick taste buds.

• Typical development: A child has to be exposed to a food 20 times prior to determining if he dislikes it.
Taste/Oral Tactile
Signs & Symptoms of Dysfunction

• **Over-responsive:**
  - Picky eater, limited diet
  - Gags easily on textured foods
  - Sensitive to tooth brushing

• **Under-responsive:**
  - Constantly chews on non-food objects, such as toys, fingers, fabric (toddlers)
  - Messy eater
Taste/Oral Tactile
Simple Solutions

- Snacks with variety of taste/textures
- Oral motor objects (exp. Chew tubes, teethers)
- Encourage your child to try a variety of food with different tastes/textures
- Vibrating electric toothbrush
- Blowing bubbles, harmonica, feathers
- Sucking is organizing to the nervous system
  Babies: Suck on pacifier, fingers, thumb, toys.
  Toddlers: Suck through straw, suck lollipop.
Taste/Oral Tactile
Simple Solutions

- Stages of Sensory Development for Feeding
  - 1. **Acceptance** - Increase child’s willingness to allow new foods on plate and decrease child’s anxiety to new foods.
  - 2. **Touch** - Increase number of foods child is willing to touch and decrease child’s anxiety when touching new foods.
  - 3. **Smell** - Produce calming effect for resistant eater and positively link smell with eating new foods.
  - 4. **Taste** - Provide child opportunity to taste food w/o swallowing, reduce child’s anxiety for tasting new foods.
- Book **Just Take a Bite (2004)** Ernsperger, L., Stegen-Hanson, T.
Motor Planning
Simple Solutions

• 5 repetitions – Feed Forward
• Break task into small steps and practice
• Use pictures to sequence toddler through task
• Let other children go first to model action
• Have child repeatedly practice newly learned motor skills, rolling, crawling, walking, jumping.
Sensory Diet

Patricia Wilbarger, PhD, OTR

- Sensory strategies & accommodations that a child engages in and uses throughout daily routines as “food” for the nervous system.

- Used intermittently to help a child maintain a “just right” alertness for focusing and emotional well-being.
Infants/Toddlers

- Apply during daily routines
- Playtime
- Mealtime
- Bedtime
- Bath Time
- Dressing
Playtime

- “Heavy Work” activities exp. Pulling wagon with blocks, climbing, roughhousing
- Textured/scented toys for infants
- Textured play mat (egg crate foam)
- Light up/musical toys
Mealtime/Feeding

- Oral motor exercises between mealtimes
- Vibrating teether or toothbrush
- Popsicle/sour sucker (alerting)
- Spoon shape, size texture?
- Food smell/textures
Intervention for Sensory Related Feeding Disorder

- Not all feeding problems have sensory basis, consult MD r/o medical issues (reflux, teething)
- Feeding time environment - adult relaxed, child alert, environment calm
- Predictable routine for mealtime
- Position child in supportive stable chair for postural stability
- Make mealtime pleasurable
- Use calming (over-responsive) or alerting (under-responsive) techniques prior to feeding
- Introduce changes in food textures slowly
Intervention for Sensory Related Feeding Disorder

- Try finger food first
- Crunchy foods that do not require a lot of chewing
- Use taste and smell to influence reactivity
- Minimize non-essential touch to the mouth
- Avoid frequent wiping of the mouth
- Allow child to close mouth on spoon and remove food rather than scraping food off upper lip/teeth
- Parent involvement essential - work toward collaborative goals
Bedtime

- Lullaby music/white noise
- Low light
- T-shirt sheets
- Snug pajamas

Avoid over arousal activities prior to bedtime
Intervention for Sensory Related Sleeping Problems

- R/O medical issues (teething, sleep apnea, reflux, psychological)
- Gather assessment data (e.g. sleep schedule, environmental stresses)
- Determine how specific sensory input affects child’s sleep patterns (e.g. rocking, quiet music)
- Increase sleep/wake pattern promoting night time
- Too much stimulation during the day may cause child to “shut down” resulting in daytime sleep.
Intervention for Sensory Related Sleeping Problems

- Calming input in evening (e.g. massage, rocking)
- Help child learn to self-soothe to fall asleep (put in bed when drowsy but still awake, provide pacifier, tuck in blankets for neutral warmth, stuffed animals to cuddle with)
- Decrease arousal activities prior to bedtime (roughhousing)
- White noise in background
- Give child security object at bedtime
- Sensory quality of pajamas for child’s preferences
Bath Time

• Scented bath soaps/shampoos
• Textured wash scrubs/firm pressure touch
• Water temperature
• Warm towel from dryer
• Fun foam soaps
• Pouring toys
Dressing

• Rub lotion on before dressing
• Wear tight fitting clothing
• Select bright colors/patterns
• Be aware of laundry detergent smells
Diana A. Henry, MS, OTR/L, Maureen Kane-Wineland, PhD, OT/L and Susan Swindeman, OTR/L, BCP have co-authored this unique book. It is designed to offer practical sensory options to improve the ability of toddlers and preschoolers to function in their environments at home, in child care centers and in school. A variety of sensory ‘buffet’ activities and environmental strategies are offered in a very user friendly format, highlighting the different sensory ‘tools.’ Topics include Picky Eater Tidbits, Tooth Brush Tamers, Potty Pleasers, Hair Care, Nail Nippers, Tubby Time Tips, Beddie Bye Bliss, and more! Learn how to promote engagement and help Touchy Tots, Sensitive Ears, Busy Bees, Fumbling Tots, Tippy Toe Tots, and Spirited Tots get along, and what to do to get your tot the help he needs.

www.ATeachAbout.com
“The true object of all human life is play.”

G.K. Chesterton
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