SENSORY STORYTIME HOW-TO GUIDE

Created by the Tulsa City-County Library Sensory Storytime Pilot Committee

Goal General Guidelines Before the Event Day of the Event Arrival at Event
Sample Storytime Materials for Storytime

What is the Goal of Sensory Storytime?:

- To provide free, inclusive, interactive programming for children with sensory integration issues and their peers through the Tulsa City-County Library. Combine books, songs, movement, and therapeutic activities into a program that stimulates all five senses and promotes learning.

General Guidelines:

- It is important to talk to the parents before the storytime to get an idea of what each child can handle. Some children with sensory processing disorders may not tolerate bright lights, loud noises, or certain sensations, but it is different for every child. Follow what works for your group. For example, play music quietly during an activity or not at all if an issue arises.

- Storytime registration must be capped at 10-12, and each child must be accompanied by an adult.

- You can rotate in different books, activities and themes. But *always* keep your overall schedule and open and close rituals (usually a song) the same.

- Include *more* activities and *less* books than you would in a typical storytime.

- Heavy work activities are great for Sensory Storytime - examples listed below.

- Include as many tactile components as you can. For example, touch and feel books, furry stuffed animals, beanbags, feathers, etc.

- Every Sensory Storytime should include a Picture Activity Schedule. This is a visual representation of each activity in the storytime. You can take your own pictures to use (examples: picture of storytime leader reading a book, picture of kids singing, etc.) or use generic pictures. You can tape these on the wall, a board, a magnetic oil drip pan, or whatever works for you (Examples Below).

- Explain the order of the Picture Activity Schedule at the beginning of the storytime, and refer to it before each book/activity/song.

- Don't be afraid of repetition.
- Ignore behaviors that are not harmful.
- Having a copy of the featured book for each child is encouraged if possible.
- Book choice resources:
    - Children with ADHD - www.readingrockets.org/article/41119/
    - Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder - www.readingrockets.org/article/41114
    - Children with Cerebral Palsy - www.readingrockets.org/article/41116
    - Children with Hearing Loss or Deafness - www.readingrockets.org/article/41118
    - Children with Intellectual Disabilities - www.readingrockets.org/article/41115
    - Children with Low Vision or Blindness - www.readingrockets.org/article/41117
    - Children with Speech and Language Problems - www.readingrockets.org/article/41113
    - www.beagooddad.com/237/good-books-for-children-with-autism/

Before the Event:

1. Survey your community to get feedback about days and times that are most convenient for families interested in Sensory programming.

2. If this is your library's first Sensory Storytime, you will need to create a visual guide for families. A visual guide will allow children to gain familiarity with the library before Sensory Storytime. It should feature all aspects of a library visit: parking, entrances, children's area, staff, where is the bathroom, etc.

    a. Libraries & Autism We're Connected "This Is My Library" Visual Guide Template - www.librariesandautism.org/resources.htm
    b. Example: Herman & Kate Kaiser Library Visual Guide - http://goo.gl/qj6Nf

3. Create an online or in person registration. A small group is part of what makes Sensory Storytime effective and engaging for the children participating. Establish how many people you want to attend. Open registration Four to five weeks before an event. SurveyMonkey is an excellent resource for online event registration. Things to include in registration:

    a. First Name of Child Attending
    b. Age of Child Attending
    c. First and Last Name of Adult Accompanying Child
    d. Contact Information: Email / Phone
    e. Any additional information about the child attending that may help in the planning/preparation for this Sensory Storytime session.

4. Plan storytime and assemble Picture Activity Schedule – choose activities from the list, or make-up your own. Ideas for activities below.

    a. http://www.sensory-processing-disorder.com/heavy-work-activities.html
    b. Balance beam/tactile path - tape on the floor
    c. Therabands with/without playing a song
    d. Scarves with/without song

e. Beanbags with/without song
f. Bubbles with/without song
g. Rhythm instruments - quiet ones – shakers are ok, no bells
h. Frosting color mixing
i. Activities with sand, dry rice, or other tactile objects
j. Blowing pompoms with straw
k. Fingerplays
l. Puppets
m. Songs to be sung – may be helpful to print out copies for parents
n. Books to read – one for each child is helpful if possible

Day of Event:

1. Clear area of distractions – anything on walls or floor.

2. Set up a small tent, or "quiet corner" as a calm and quiet place for children to go to if they get over stimulated.

3. Make nametags for all parents – include parent and child's name on tag. You can make a name board of some sort for the kids if you like, but no nametags on the kids.

4. Turn down lights if possible.

5. Mark off seating area – with carpet squares, chairs, bittybottoms, or tape Xs on the floor.

6. Hang Picture Activity Schedule.

When Families arrive:

1. Greet them at the door.

2. Hand out nametags, fidgets - small squishy objects for children to use therapeutically during program, and individual books - if available.

3. Assess Picture Activity Schedule and make changes to your storytime as necessary – i.e. Age/developmental level of children attending is higher/lower than expected.

4. Go over Picture Activity Schedule with group once everyone is there, and make a quick mention of the quiet area if anyone would like to make use of it.

Sample Storytime Plan:

1. Hello Song:

   Hi, hello, and how are you,
   How are you, how are you?
   Hi, hello, and how are you,
   How are you today?

2. Fingerplay/puppet activity

3. Big Book or Touch and Feel book with copies for everyone

4. Activity – balance beam, follow the leader on tactile path, or therabands - may add a song playing quietly

5. Book or calming activity and book if needed – i.e.. Singing "Open Shut Them" before reading book

6. Activity that goes with book – i.e. *Mouse Paint* with frosting color mixing activity, *Dinosaur Dig* with children look for objects buried in sand or rice, or a song that matches the book

7. Goodbye song

   We wave goodbye like this.
   We wave goodbye like this.
   We clap our hands for all our friends.
   We wave goodbye like this.

8. Playtime – get out toys and let parents socialize – may need to show children how to play with the toys

9. Possible clean-up song

Materials to Try in Sensory Storytime:

1. Abilitations BittyBottoms, or another therapeutic seating option
2. Thera-Band Latex Exercise Bands (For movement activities)
3. Pop-up Play Tent (Provides an enclosed space to visit due to sensory overstimulation)
4. Crawl Through Play Tunnel (For physical motor activity and coordination)
5. Tactile Balance Beam Path (For physical motor activity and coordination)
6. Colored Movement Scarves, Bean Bags, or Feather Quills
7. Fidget Toys
8. Soft Floor Puzzles and early literacy toys like fabric blocks, textured alphabet letters, etc.
9. Container Disinfecting Wipes

Remember, the most important thing about Sensory Storytime is creating an inclusive, welcoming and judgment free environment for learning and play! If you have any questions or comments about Sensory Storytime, please contact Tulsa City-County Library Youth Services Coordinators Emily Tichenor (etichen@tulsalibrary.org or 918-549-7490) and Lenore St. John (lstjohn@tulsalibrary.org or 918-549-7491).