



TRAUMA INFORMED PBS PRESENTS

# CHILD TRAUMA TOOLKIT

A FREE GUIDE OF PRACTICAL STRATEGIES,  
TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

---

[WWW.TIPBS.COM](http://WWW.TIPBS.COM)

# HELLO THERE!

---

This resource has been created for the Trauma Informed Positive Behaviour Support (TIPBS) program.

The TIPBS team would like to acknowledge the many educators across the globe who are part of the TIPBS trauma-informed community of practice. Thank you for working with us to make schools responsive to the needs of the most vulnerable children in our community.

© 2017, Trauma Informed Positive Behaviour Support  
Email: [kay@tipbs.com](mailto:kay@tipbs.com)



**WWW.TIPBS.COM**

# CONTENTS

---

WHAT IS CHILD TRAUMA?	3
CHILD TRAUMA STRATEGIES	4
CHILD TRAUMA TOOLS	14
CHILD TRAUMA RESOURCES	32

# WHAT IS CHILD TRAUMA?

A **TRAUMATIC EVENT** IS AN INCIDENT THAT CAUSES PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, SPIRITUAL, OR PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM. THE PERSON EXPERIENCING THE DISTRESSING EVENT MAY FEEL THREATENED, ANXIOUS, OR FRIGHTENED AS A RESULT.

**CHILD TRAUMA** DESCRIBES THE PROBLEM OF CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO MULTIPLE OR PROLONGED TRAUMATIC EVENTS AND THE IMPACT OF THIS EXPOSURE ON THEIR DEVELOPMENT.

TRAUMA EXPOSURE INVOLVES THE SIMULTANEOUS OR SEQUENTIAL OCCURRENCE OF **CHILD MALTREATMENT**—INCLUDING PSYCHOLOGICAL MALTREATMENT, NEGLECT, PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE, AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE—THAT IS CHRONIC, BEGINS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD, AND OCCURS WITHIN THE CHILD'S FAMILY.



**CHILD TRAUMA  
STRATEGIES**

**MEMORY**

# MEMORY

---

## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Challenges with memory for traumatised students is related to the brain's reduced ability to store and retrieve information, as well as make associations and generalize. It is important to understand that memory problems are experienced by students as a result of abuse and neglect and its subsequent impact on the brain.

### **MORE TIME**

Traumatised students need more time to learn some things. You can help by being patient and explaining the same things multiple times.

### **CHECK**

Asking traumatised students to repeat instructions back does not ensure that they understand. Request that they "show you" or explain in their own words.

### **VISUALS**

Use agendas, visual calendars, reminders, notes or anything else the student feels comfortable using to support the individual's memory for day-to-day activities.

### **REPEAT**

It is helpful if a student receives the same message in the same form from everyone – it is important to repeat, repeat, repeat.

### **SPEECH**

Communicate while being mindful of an student's ability to process information. Be aware of the pace and tone of your speech.

### **PATIENCE**

Be patient - memory is a lifelong issue. With support and practice, students can learn to become self sufficient over time.



**CHILD TRAUMA  
STRATEGIES**

**TRANSITIONS**

# TRANSITIONS

---

## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Traumatized students often do not cope well with transitions or switching from one task to another. Transitions can also include more significant life changes, such as moving to a new city or ending high school. A transition is anything that results in changes to relationships, environments, routines, expectations, or roles. Transition planning can help to minimize difficulties – this involves understanding an individual’s strengths, needs, and goals.

### **SCHEDULE**

Provide a predictable schedule. Having the schedule on a wall, phone, fridge or any other easily viewed location is helpful.

### **FOREWARN**

Prepare for transition and give plenty of forewarning. Use verbal prompts to initiate the end of one activity and shift to the next activity.

### **RECOGNISE**

Recognize the potential impact of life transitions before they happen (moving from a family home to a different home, being removed from cultural traditions).

### **STORIES**

Use social stories that help to explain what will occur in future transitions. Repeat them regularly.

### **CUES**

Use times, activities, and television shows to indicate when a transition may happen.

### **CONSISTENT**

Be patient, transitioning takes time to improve. Trust in the consistent and predictable transitions in a school day help students to improve over time.





# CHILD TRAUMA STRATEGIES

IMPULSE CONTROL

# IMPULSE CONTROL

---

## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Students with complex trauma tend to have poor impulse control. Remember, child trauma impacts the brain and impulse control is a neurological function. The frontal lobe, which is the part of the brain that controls inhibitions and judgment, does not function properly for some traumatised students and as a result there are difficulties with impulse control.

### **ROLE PLAY**

Students have trouble with impulse control in social situations, thus it may be helpful to develop “role playing scripts” for common situations.

### **PROMPT**

Cues and reminders can help students control impulses by interrupting the process between impulse and action.

### **PLAN**

Develop a plan that includes one-on-one support, where the student can explore his/her perspective, discuss other perspectives and make informed decisions.

### **STORIES**

Identify a support person that the student can call when he or she has a question. This person’s role is to provide judgment-free guidance upon request only.

### **MODEL**

Model impulse control out loud - say what you are thinking. For example: “I really want to buy a chocolate bar, but I also want to save money to buy a new t-shirt.”

### **MINIMISE**

Avoid situations in which students have not been able to control their impulses before without supervision.



# CHILD TRAUMA STRATEGIES

SOCIAL SKILLS

# SOCIAL SKILLS

---

## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Students with complex trauma may be functioning at a much younger developmental age. As a result, there can be a gap between an individual's social maturity and that of their peers. They may choose to spend time with younger peers because they are more developmentally similar. As a result of these factors it can be difficult for these students to develop and maintain meaningful friendships.

### **AVOID**

Avoid large groups of people for social interactions – one or two friends is often much more significant.

### **MENTOR**

If the opportunity for a mentor is available to your client this can improve quality of life for the client

### **EXPECTATIONS**

Adjust expectations to fit a student's developmental age, and not just their chronological age.

### **TEACH**

Teach examples of what healthy friendships look like and help to identify positive friends.

### **STRENGTHS**

Build on strengths and interests that can engage them in social activities. Use these opportunities to model good behaviour.

### **TALK**

Have open conversations about relationships and conflict resolution. Encourage social problem solving and empathy through discussions.



# CHILD TRAUMA STRATEGIES

SENSORY DYSFUNCTION

# SENSORY DYSFUNCTION

---

## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Traumatized students may be over-sensitive (hypersensitive) or under-sensitive (hyposensitive). Those who are hypersensitive are very sensitive to touch, movement, light, or sound. Because of the way their brains work, they may be so distracted by what they hear, see, or feel that they can't focus on other things. When individuals are hypersensitive they may feel the need to shut down and act out as they try to stop the thing that is bothering them.

### **ACCOMMODATE**

Think accommodations: "How can I adapt the environment to support this student to succeed?"

### **ASSESS**

An occupation therapy assessment can provide information about sensory preferences and sensitivities of the student.

### **RECOGNISE**

Recognize the potential sensory impact of noise, smells, environment, clothing, etc. Review the sensory triggers for the student.

### **TOOLS**

Textured and weighted blankets may be helpful depending on an individual's sensory profile. Try soothing music & comforting scents.

### **DISTRACTIONS**

Limit the amount of distractions and visual stimulation in the bedroom – limit furniture and ensure that personal belongings can be stored out of sight.

### **SAFE SPACE**

Develop a system when the student can take a break from the class to go to a 'safe space'. Design the space with the student to be calming.



# CHILD TRAUMA TOOLS

REMINDERS

# Washing the Dishes



1. Empty sink & fill with warm water



2. Add one squirt of dish soap



3. Get a clean dish cloth

## REMINDERS

This tool involves placing images throughout the classroom that can prompt the individual with instructions they have struggled with in the past. The layout or design of the picture should depend on the developmental age and preferences of the individual, it can include clipart images, Images of the students actually doing the task, or just words to prompt their memory.

While the student is still learning to utilize the reminder pictures it can be useful to have a support person point to the images to prompt the student to use the new tool. A good idea is to print and laminate the pictures so they last longer.





# CHILD TRAUMA TOOLS

CHORE CHARTS



# CHORE CHARTS

---

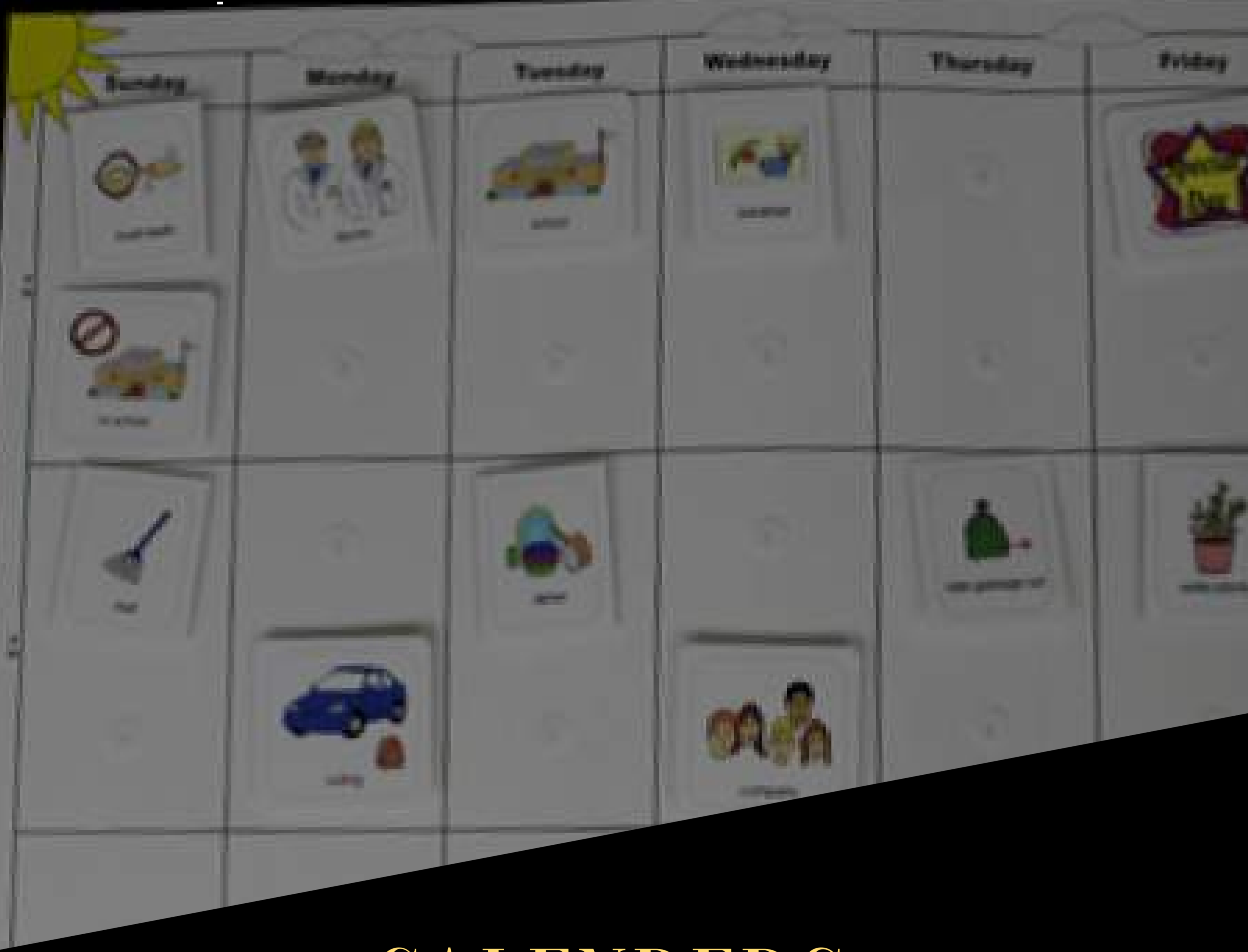
Chore charts are a good way to teach responsibility as well as consistency. Often individuals with complex trauma learn best through repetition so creating standard chore charts can assist them in learning what chore they are expected to complete and act as a visual prompt so they remember to do their chores.

These charts can be as complex or simple as you wish, many designs are available online ranging from simple lists to magnetic or Velcro boards with removable tasks.



# CHILD TRAUMA TOOLS

CALENDERS



# CALENDERS

---

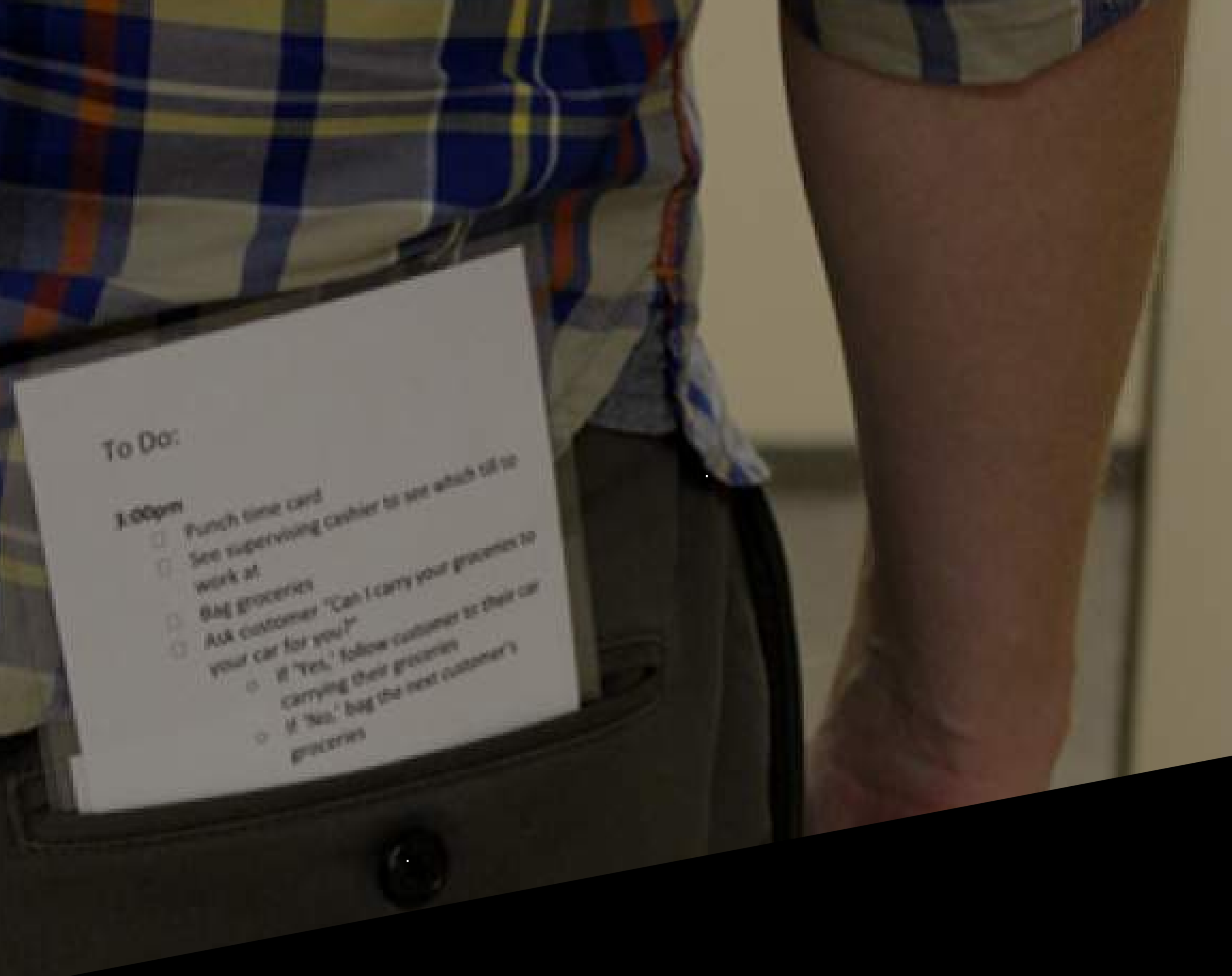
Using a planner or calendar is a skill that keeps one's life organized. For students with complex trauma this skill is invaluable because individuals often have trouble with memory causing missed appointments, frustration and anxiety. By incorporating a planner or calendar the individual is able to feel a sense of control over his or her own day-to-day operations, and has more success getting to appointments on time.

You can create a magnetic or Velcro calendar with images of appointments or tasks that can be attached or you can simply create an appointment template to print for your student to attach to their calendar at home.



# CHILD TRAUMA TOOLS

TASK LIST



## To Do:

1:00pm

- Punch time card
- See supervising cashier to see what till to work at
- Bag groceries
- Ask customer "Can I carry your groceries to your car for you?"
  - If "Yes," follow customer to their car carrying their groceries
  - If "No," bag the next customer's groceries

# TASK LIST

---

Students with complex trauma may struggle to complete simple tasks because they struggle with one of the most basic expectations, memory. Providing students with a step by step list of what tasks they need to complete at home, work or school will assist their memory. Another benefit of these lists, is that they assist the individuals with prioritizing the importance of tasks.

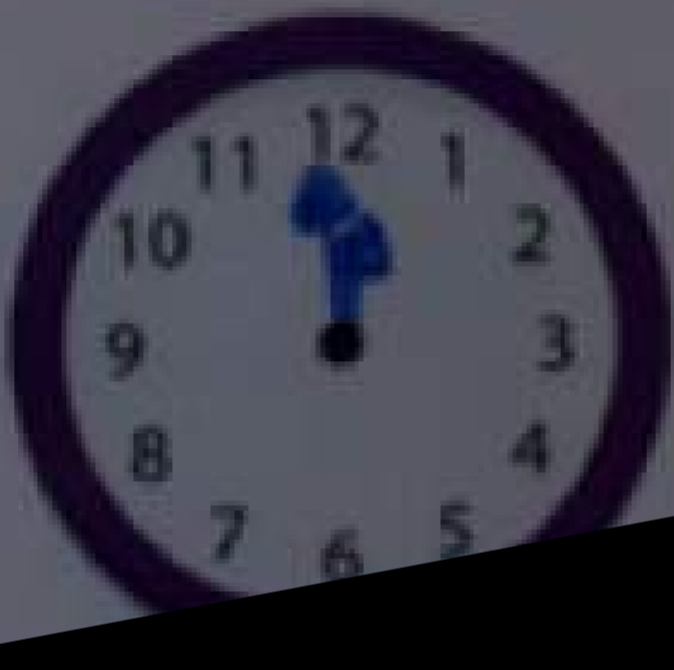
Laminating the list will make it more durable and allow the individual to check off the tasks they have completed that day, erase it after all their tasks are completed and use it again the next day.



# CHILD TRAUMA TOOLS

TIME KEEPING

School Starts



# TIME KEEPING

---

The anxiety and stress experienced during transitioning may be caused by not understanding when the next break or meal is coming. This can lead to individuals seeming distant and confused throughout the day because they can feel lost in time and sometimes slip into a type of survival mode. Time is an abstract concept for most individuals living on the spectrum. Clocks or clock print outs can help individuals understand when the important transition and events of the day need to happen. For some individuals this may be as simple as using a digital clock which is easier to read than an analogue clock.





# CHILD TRAUMA TOOLS

WEIGHTED TOYS



# WEIGHTED TOYS

---

Weighted instruments can provide therapeutic relief to individuals who are stressed, anxious, or need to calm down. Weighted instruments such as blankets help individuals feel safe and secure in the same way that a firm hug does. Due to the sensory processing issues associated with child trauma, the extra weight and pressure can soothe and realign the senses. There are many items around the home that can be turned into a weighted instrument. Add rice to the stuffed animal, in lieu of the stuffing. You may need a funnel to do this. Add to your desired weight, remembering not to make it too heavy, but not too light that it won't have an effect. Leave some extra space to help shift the animal around.



# CHILD TRAUMA TOOLS

SENSORY BOARDS



# SENSORY BOARDS

---

Sensory boards provide hands on sensory play, they work to stimulate and entertain students. This easy DIY tool consists of different textures and materials affixed to a board. The boards can help students calm down as they touch the different textures and focus on that sensation.

Boards can be made in any size and customized to best suit an individual. In the example below household items such as sponges, marbles, fake grass, etc. were glued to a canvas.



# CHILD TRAUMA TOOLS

WATER BEADS



# WATER BEADS

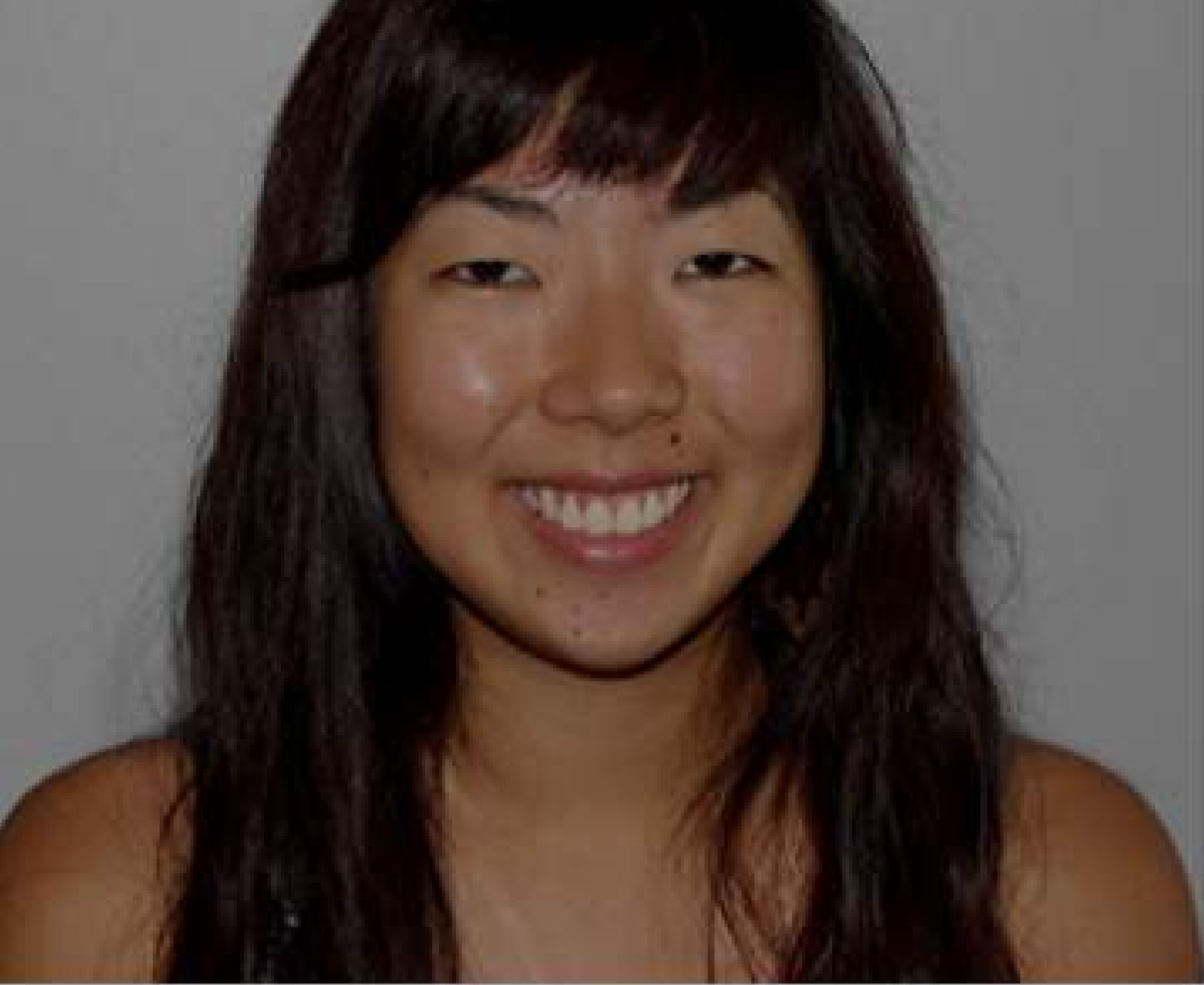
---

Some traumatised students struggle with focus and active listening, as a result they often display behaviours that make them seem restless. These behaviours can be disruptive in some settings, tools such as fidget toys can help center their focus by directing their movements and energy into a small hand held toy, allowing them to listen and pay attention. There are many options for DIY fidget toys, the picture above shows how to add water beads to a balloon to create a very easy fidget toy.



# CHILD TRAUMA TOOLS

EMOTION CARDS



# EMOTION CARDS

---

Having no words to describe how you feel can be one of the most frustrating feelings in the world. For some students, not being able to describe an emotion or explain a feeling can often result in misunderstanding, frustration, anger, and behavioural problems.

Emotion cards can simply be images of people expressing certain emotions, they can be images of the individual themselves, or stock photos. The tool is used by asking the student to indicate which image best reflects how they are feeling at a given time. Choosing the right emotion to describe your feelings can result in empathy, understanding, patience and kindness .





# CHILD TRAUMA RESOURCES

FIDGET TOOLS

# FIDGET TOOLS

## FOOT BANDS

The foot band wraps around a child's chair legs, it can help provide stimulation that allows children to pay attention.  
[www.therapyshoppe.com](http://www.therapyshoppe.com)

## BENDEEZ

This rubbery band is a good silent fidget toy that can help with hand eye co-ordination and tactile strengthening.  
[www.therapyshoppe.com](http://www.therapyshoppe.com)

## KOOSH BALLS

Koosh balls are fun to catch and hold. They can be used to keep hands busy.  
[www.specialneedstoys.com](http://www.specialneedstoys.com)

## FITBALL AIR CUSHION

This inflatable cushion is portable and works well for those who fidget.  
[www.especialneeds.com](http://www.especialneeds.com)

## MODERN BALL CHAIR

These chairs are good for individuals who can't sit still and struggle with sensory integration.  
[www.fundandfunction.com](http://www.fundandfunction.com)

## WIGGLE SEAT

These discs sit on chairs and help individuals get the wiggles out. They are also great for strengthening core muscles.  
[www.fundandfunction.com](http://www.fundandfunction.com)





# CHILD TRAUMA RESOURCES

CALMING TOOLS

# CALMING TOOLS

## SOUNDS SPA

Nature sounds can promote relaxation and a great night's sleep.

[www.specialneedstoys.com](http://www.specialneedstoys.com)

## AROMATHERAPY

Essential oils can be used to stimulate the senses and also to soothe and calm the senses.

[www.specialneedstoys.com](http://www.specialneedstoys.com)

## WARM HUGS

Provides calming stimulation as the lamb is warming and gives off soothing and calming scents.

[www.specialneedstoys.com](http://www.specialneedstoys.com)

## TRANQUIL TURTLE

This provides soothing stimulation for sight and smell with relaxing sights and smells.

[www.specialneedstoys.com](http://www.specialneedstoys.com)

## WEIGHTED BLANKET

A weighted blanket can help with sensory disorders, sleep disorders or just to help unwind.

[www.funandfunction.com](http://www.funandfunction.com)

## BODY SOCKS

A body sock allows for privacy and can increase a person's feeling of personal safety.

[www.especialneeds.com](http://www.especialneeds.com)





# CHILD TRAUMA RESOURCES

SENSORY TOOLS

# SENSORY TOOLS

## CHEWIES

Chewies can help individuals living with sensory input issues by promoting tactile exploration.

[www.funandfunction.com](http://www.funandfunction.com)

## ZIGGY PASTA

This soothing sensory toy is a fun way to provide therapeutic tactile input for sensitive to textures & touch.

[www.therapyshoppe.com](http://www.therapyshoppe.com)

## NOISELESS EARPONES

These earphones reduce the volume of noise for individuals with auditory sensitivities.

[www.especialneeds.com](http://www.especialneeds.com)

## SENSORY ROLLER

This sensory tool can be rolled on the individual to provide relieving sensations.

[www.therapyshoppe.com](http://www.therapyshoppe.com)

## VIBRATING SNAIL

The snail has many different textures and an engaging antenna, it is great for the senses.

[www.funandfunction.com](http://www.funandfunction.com)

## SENSORY TABLE

This multi-use table provides sensory activities for those who seek sensory stimulation.

[www.specialneedstoys.com](http://www.specialneedstoys.com)





# CHILD TRAUMA RESOURCES

MOVEMENT BREAKS

# MOVEMENT BREAKS

## GEARS SET

This set helps to develop fine motor skills, creativity and problem solving.

[www.fatbraintoys.com](http://www.fatbraintoys.com)

## PLAY TUNNEL

A tunnel can be lots of fun while also strengthening gross motor skills.

[www.especialneeds.com](http://www.especialneeds.com)

## STEPPING STONES

These stones attach to feet to help with balance and coordination.

[www.specialneedstoys.com](http://www.specialneedstoys.com)

## PLASMA CARS

Plasma cars are moved by turning the steering wheel. Combining the direction and movement controls exercises both the body & the brain.

[www.specialneedstoys.com](http://www.specialneedstoys.com)







# CHILD TRAUMA RESOURCES

TIME MANAGEMENT

# TIME MANAGEMENT

## RUGGIE CLOCK

Rug alarm clocks help prompt individuals to get out of bed, the snooze button can only be hit by standing on the rug.

[www.ruggie.com](http://www.ruggie.com)

## TIME TIMER

This is a great tool to use when changing from one activity to another. The time provides warning that a change is coming up.

[www.specialneedstoys.com](http://www.specialneedstoys.com)

## NOISELESS EARPONES

Magnetic schedules or calendars can help prompt individuals so they know what tasks to do at what time.

[www.specialneedstoys.com](http://www.specialneedstoys.com)

## VIBRATING SNAIL

This visual timer and clock provides light and sound cues to keep individuals on task.

[www.learningresources.com](http://www.learningresources.com)



ITRAUMA INFORMED PBS PRESENTS

# TRAUMA INFORMED SUPPORT PODCAST

A FREE PODCAST FOR EDUCATORS

---

FIND THE PODCAST ON ITUNES OR CLICK HERE  
<http://apple.co/2wjPqtA>

**WWW.TIPBS.COM**



The Trauma Informed Positive Behaviour Support has a range of additional free resources and training opportunities on the neurobiology of trauma on our website:

[www.tipbs.com](http://www.tipbs.com)

We offer educators online training in the Trauma Informed Positive Behaviour Approach, with a focus on practical ways to support vulnerable children, young people and their families within the school community.

. We can support you in planning and organising a specifically tailored professional development programs.

Please contact us at [kay@tipbs.com](mailto:kay@tipbs.com)