



ND Sensory Toolkit for Home

Simple sensory supports to reduce overload and increase safety

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Important note

This resource is intended to support understanding and good practice in neuro-inclusive workplace design. It provides general guidance and does not constitute legal, medical, or clinical advice. Organisations should apply the principles in line with their own policies, regulatory obligations, and professional judgement.

Home should be a place where nervous systems can **downshift...** not just function.

For many ND people, overload builds quietly from:

- constant background noise
- harsh or unpredictable lighting
- visual clutter
- smells, temperature shifts, or touch demands
- being “on” socially with no real break

This toolkit helps you make **small, realistic changes** that have a big impact.

You don't need to redesign your whole home.

A few safer spots and predictable supports are often enough.

How to use this toolkit

- Pick **one or two** areas to start
 - Focus on **reducing input**, not adding more
 - Let the ND person lead where possible
 - Think in terms of **signals of safety**, not perfection
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1. Sound: creating quieter layers

Sound is one of the biggest hidden overload drivers.

Support options

- Noise-cancelling headphones or ear defenders
- Predictable background sound (brown noise, rain, a familiar show)
- Soft furnishings (rugs, cushions) to absorb sound
- Agreed “quiet times” during the day

Helpful signals

- It's okay to block sound
 - Silence isn't rude
 - Headphones = regulation, not avoidance
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2. Light: softer, more controllable lighting

Harsh lighting can keep the nervous system on high alert.

Support options

- Lamps instead of overhead lights
- Warm bulbs rather than bright white
- Dimmer switches where possible
- Sunglasses or caps indoors if needed

Helpful signals

- Dimming lights is allowed
 - Comfort matters more than “normal” lighting
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3. Touch & pressure: helping the body feel contained

Pressure and predictable touch can be deeply regulating.

Support options

- Weighted blankets or lap pads
- Tight hoodies or compression clothing
- Heavy cushions to lean into
- Firm hugs **only if welcomed**

Helpful signals

- Comfort isn't babyish
 - Asking before touching is respected
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4. Temperature: regulating through warmth or cool

Temperature shifts can quickly change emotional intensity.

Support options

- Cool air on the face
- Cold water on wrists or hands
- Warm drinks, hot water bottles, or heat pads
- Layered clothing for easy adjustment

Helpful signals

- Changing temperature is a coping tool, not fussiness

5. Visual load: reducing what the eyes have to process

Visual clutter increases cognitive load.

Support options

- Clear one small surface (not the whole room)
- Store items in closed containers
- Reduce visual noise in rest spaces
- Keep calm, neutral colours where possible

Helpful signals

- Clear space = calmer thinking

6. Movement & stimming: letting the body regulate

Movement is often essential for regulation.

Support options

- Rocking chairs
- Floor space for pacing or stretching
- Fidget objects
- Trampolines, resistance bands, or wall push-ups

Helpful signals

- Movement is allowed
- Stillness is not required to be “well-behaved”

7. A dedicated “low-demand” space

This doesn't have to be a whole room.

It could be:

- a corner
- a bed or sofa
- a tent, den, or nook

Key features

- low light
- minimal noise
- no demands
- permission to be alone

This is a **recovery space**, not a time-out.

8. Sensory safety agreements (small but powerful)

Agree together:

- When it's okay to step away
- How to signal overload early
- That rest doesn't need explaining
- That supports can change day to day

Predictability reduces conflict.

What often makes overload worse (even at home)

- Commenting on coping tools
- Asking lots of questions during overwhelm
- Forcing conversation or eye contact
- Removing sensory supports as punishment
- Assuming "home should be relaxing by default"

Home can still be overwhelming... and that's okay to acknowledge.

Supporting *yourself* as a parent or partner

You may have different sensory needs too.

It's okay to:

- need breaks
- set boundaries
- step away once safety is established
- ask for support

You don't have to absorb all the overload to be caring.

A gentle truth

Sensory needs aren't preferences.
They're **how nervous systems stay regulated**.

When the environment feels safer, behaviour often improves...
not because anyone tried harder, but because the load dropped.

Closing note

You don't need a perfect sensory home.

You need:

- a few safer spaces
- predictable supports
- permission to adjust without shame

That's how homes become places of recovery instead of survival.

