



# Sensory Balancing

*Using light, sound, and texture changes to restore nervous-system equilibrium*

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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.

Sensory overwhelm doesn't always mean *too much* input.

Sometimes it means:

- the **wrong kind** of input
- input that's **unbalanced**
- one sense overloaded while others are underfed

Sensory balancing is the practice of **adjusting sensory input across channels** so the nervous system can stabilise without shutting down or escalating.

This is not about comfort.  
It's about **functional regulation**.

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## What sensory balancing actually is

Sensory balancing means:

- reducing what's dysregulating
- adding what's stabilising
- creating **contrast and coherence** across senses

Instead of asking:

“How do I block everything out?”

It asks:

“What does my system need *more of or less of* right now?”

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## When sensory balancing helps most

Use sensory balancing when you notice:

- agitation that doesn't settle with rest
- irritability without obvious cause
- brain fog mixed with restlessness
- emotional intensity that won't drain
- shutdown lifting but clarity not returning
- decompression that feels “flat” rather than regulating

Balancing is often the missing step **after decompression**.

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## Core principles (important)

- One or two senses at a time... never all
- Changes should be **clear but gentle**
- You are aiming for *settling*, not stimulation
- If something increases urgency or agitation, remove it

Balance is **felt**, not decided.

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## 1. Light Balancing

*Visual input has a direct impact on arousal*

### When light is dysregulating

- harsh overhead lighting
- fluorescent or flickering light
- glare from screens
- high visual contrast

### Balancing options

- dim lights or switch to lamps
- face away from screens
- add warm, indirect light
- reduce visual clutter in your field of view

### When light is too low

Low light can increase dissociation or fog for some people.

Try:

- opening a curtain briefly
- switching on a soft lamp
- stepping into natural light for 30–60 seconds

Light balance is about **orientation**, not brightness.

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## 2. Sound Balancing

*Sound regulates rhythm and containment*

### When sound is overwhelming

- overlapping voices
- unpredictable noise
- constant background hum

Balancing options:

- noise-cancelling headphones
- white noise or steady sound
- silence (only if it feels grounding)

### **When silence is dysregulating**

Silence can increase internal noise for some nervous systems.

Try:

- low, steady sound (fan, rain, brown noise)
- instrumental music without lyrics
- repetitive ambient noise

Sound balance is about **predictability**, not quiet.

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## **3. Texture & Touch Balancing**

*Tactile input anchors the body*

### **When touch input is chaotic or irritating**

- scratchy clothing
- inconsistent textures
- light, unpredictable touch

Balancing options:

- smoother fabrics
- consistent pressure (compression, weight)
- holding a single textured object

### **When touch input is absent**

Under-stimulation can increase restlessness or dissociation.

Try:

- textured object (stone, fabric, fidget)
- firm self-pressure
- grounding through feet or hands

Texture balance helps the body feel **contained and real**.

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## 4. Cross-Sensory Balancing (very effective)

Often regulation improves when **one sense calms another**.

Examples:

- visual overload → reduce light + add steady sound
- auditory overload → reduce sound + add tactile pressure
- emotional flooding → reduce input + add temperature contrast
- dissociation → add texture + gentle light

You don't need to fix everything... just **shift the balance**.

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## A simple sensory balance check (30 seconds)

Ask yourself:

1. Which sense feels loudest right now?
2. Which sense feels absent or flat?
3. What is one small adjustment I can make?

That's enough.

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## What sensory balancing is NOT

It is not:

- stimulation seeking
- sensory avoidance
- self-indulgence
- perfectionism
- a one-size-fits-all solution

It is **adaptive tuning**.

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## Sensory balancing in workplaces & public spaces

Discreet options include:

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- adjusting screen brightness
- wearing a textured ring or fabric
- stepping into natural light briefly
- using neutral background sound
- layering clothing for pressure

No explanation required.

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## For managers, educators, and supporters

Support sensory balancing by:

- allowing micro-adjustments without scrutiny
- avoiding “you’re fine” responses
- offering choice, not prescription
- recognising that regulation is individual

Balance cannot be standardised.

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## If sensory balancing doesn’t work

Sometimes the system needs:

- decompression instead (reduce everything)
- proprioceptive input
- movement
- temperature change
- rest

Balancing is **one tool**, not the tool.

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## A phrase to remember

“I’m not broken... my senses are out of balance.”

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## A final reminder

Neurodivergent regulation is often about **tuning**, not controlling.

Small changes in light, sound, or texture can:

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- prevent escalation
- restore clarity
- reduce emotional intensity
- extend usable energy

You don't need silence.  
You don't need stillness.  
You need **balance**.

