

Helping My Sensory Needs

Everyday situations:

The Bathroom



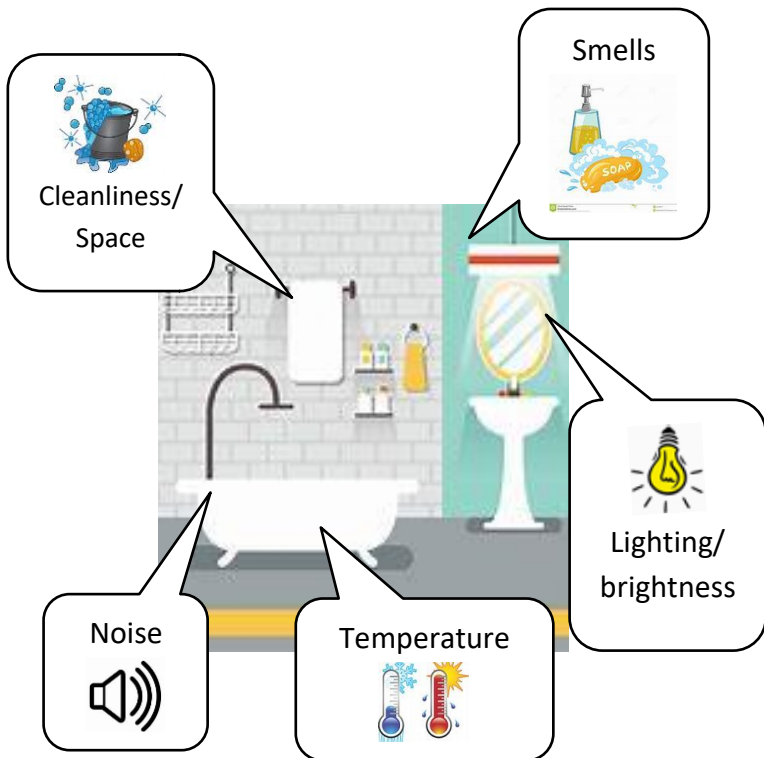
The bathroom is a complicated environment for the senses:

- Smells: the toilet, cleaning products and shower products make strong smells.
- Sounds: tiled waterproof spaces can make loud echos. The toilet flush is loud. Pipes can make creaks and bangs.
- Eyes: the lights can often be bright, the surfaces can be very bright.
- Textures: the feeling of water, it can be cold.

Many children can feel worried about activities in the bathroom. Sometimes it might be:

- a) because of sensory feelings,
- b) they don't know how to do the activity, or
- c) they've had a scary time in the past and are afraid.

It is important to be patient and explore ways to make this environment more tolerable for them, so they can learn important skills for independence in toileting, washing, hair brushing, teeth brushing and dressing.



How to Help?

Make it fun

Use your child's interests and things that motivate them to make the activity and space more fun.

Try using soap, towels, pictures of their favourite characters or toys, make a box of bathroom safe toys like bubbles, toys for the bath that float, old or spare kitchen items like scoops and cups for pouring.



If your child is very afraid of the bathroom, try taking small steps over a few weeks to help them feel more comfortable. For example:

- 1) Collect water from the bathroom for the watering can, to water plants.
- 2) Cleaning party, using child-safe spray, use cloths & foaming soap to wipe down the bathroom & play music
- 3) Wash their toys in the bath or shower, and dry them. Pretend and, talk to the toys about what's happening.

Help their senses to feel more comfortable, by changing the environment

- Play calming familiar music they like.
- Try to make the temperature more comfortable e.g. more towels on the floor.
- Try to make the smells better: open windows to air out before your child comes in, try different products at the shop and ask them to choose smells they like.
- Often the water can be a difficult feeling for the skin, and the transition of going from wet to dry. Try to give your child a big wrap up in a towel after the bath/shower and a hug to help their skin feel better.



Make it familiar

Creating a routine can decrease stress by making things predictable. Try using the bathroom at the same time each day with your child.



Now then Next:

Prepare them by saying 'now dinner, then bath next' and 'bath, then story next'. Try making a fun activity after the bathroom, so they are motivated to finish. You could have pictures to show them, or show them the book and say 'first bath then book'.

Now	Next

Supports:

Use behavioural supports (visuals, posters, timers on a phone, countdowns etc...) to help your child know what to expect. Picture posters on the wall that show each step of the task can help, point and teach them to follow the steps.



Preparing for the Bathroom

If your child generally loves to move a lot, or is very sensitive to touch/textures, try activities before or during the bathroom activities, to help them feel calm.

For example:

- Deep pressure hugs can help your child if they are sensitive to touch. Offer this and see if they like it. Always follow their lead and if they don't want it, it is very important not to force them.



- Heavy work such as push or pull games using the muscles can also have a calming effect. This could be carrying the laundry, having a crawling race, jumping from the sofa into a pile of cushions, or playing 'row row your boat' holding hands and rocking too and fro.



- Heads Shoulder's Knees & Toes game can give nice gentle movement and touch for the body to help feel more aware of the body before washing or dressing.



Learning Independence

Teaching: Use demonstrating, coaching and showing them, how to learn the bathroom activities. Say: 'Watch this, copy me'.

Use a big mirror so they can see what they are doing. Get a small footstool so they can see in the mirror.



Have a box of self-care items: soap, washer, toothbrush, toothpaste, hair brush and other items. Play with the items together, teach them what they are called and how to use them, pretend and play with toys, let them practice on you. Lots of practice helps.



Make it Easier: If you are not seeing progress, grade the activity by breaking it down into achievable steps. The first step may be as small as spending a set amount of time in the bathroom. Once comfortable in the bathroom, then introduce another aspect, like taking off clothing. This might have to be one piece at a time.



Praise: Celebrate small successes, such as using a reward chart, and give verbal encouragement and praise.

Resources:

Toys you can make at home:

Cleaning Toys & Fruit: choose fruit that has a hard surface and bring it to the bathroom to wash it:



Old Kitchen Equipment:

Cups, whisk, bowls, jugs. Use them to pour, mix.



Messy Play with Food: We understand sometimes it might not always be possible to use food for messy play due to finances. When it is possible, consider using some lower cost food items for play, such as flour, beans, rice, cereals, sauces, to draw on the inside of the bath or shower and make shapes, lines, write names and then wash it all away with the water.



Video for messy play in the bath:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUPcFwe_cTWo

Toys you can buy:

Floating toys like boats or ducks:



Watering Can to water the plants outside, come and fill it up in the shower or bath so they feel more comfortable using the bathroom. Then use the watering can to play in the bath or shower.



A sticky non-slip bath mat can help the child feel more stable in the bath. This can be helpful for children who struggle with balance or find slippery surfaces uncomfortable.



Search <https://www temu.com/uk> or Google.

Bath Water Wheel: Search Mulberry Bush or Google.



Sprinkler Toys: Search <https://www temu.com/uk> or Google.



Foaming Bath Soap:
Google or Poudland

