Sensory Systems

The sensory systems are great tools to modify baby's experience and enhance regulation.

Vision

Drives motor movement. Baby may turn or follow faces and toys OR may turn away when presented with too much visual stimulation.

Find the right:
- Distance
- Duration
- Brightness

- Promote midline fixation with eyes

Touch

Usually comforting depending on their preferences and what kind of input is provided.

- Find soft fabrics and toys to wrap baby in and play with them
- Place a hand on their chest with gentle pressure
- Use skin-to-skin contact to build a positive bond
- Use a moderate touch (not soft and not hard) when holding baby or giving them a massage

Body Position

Provides opportunities for baby to develop motor control while interacting in their world; eventually being in and moving through positions where they feel most regulated.

- Use Tummy Time
- Avoid unnecessary time in containers (containers include all baby equipment, e.g. stroller, Boppy, car seat)
- Place baby in flexion (gathering baby's body towards the middle)

Sound

Just like vision, sound can be calming OR overwhelming for baby. It's important to develop a way to calm baby when they experience unsettling sounds. Sound gives baby awareness of their body position in space.

- Use gentle, rhythmic, sing-song voice to calm baby if fussy
- Shake a rattle to get baby's attention and use as a distractor from what may be troubling them
- Find a good volume for baby using their facial cues as a measure of what they prefer most

Movement

Gives baby awarness of their body position in space. Until baby is able to move their body into positions that help them feel regulated, they rely on their caregivers.

- Rock baby slowly to help calm them
  - Rhythmic for calming
  - Less rhythmic for arousing

Tips for using sensory systems

- Provide a proper balance of sensory inputs, too much or too little can further dysregulate baby

- Vary the amount of input baby gets to determine what is tolerable/preferable

- Use caregivers to help implement these inputs

www.Pathways.org • Facebook.com/PathwaysDotOrg • Instagram: @PathwaysOrg