

**Do** you feel trapped by your child's sensory struggles or hyperactivity? Are you tired of unexpected outbursts or inability to focus? Do you need more tools in your kit to help your child thrive in school or at home? **Move PAST sensory struggles** and give movers and shakers what they need to thrive with these key learning tips.

All you have to remember is PAST – Protein, Activity, Sensory Play and Timing.

**P**

**Protein regulates the brain.** Protein is critical if you want your child to develop self-control, focus and the ability to process information. Protein-rich foods are used by the brain to make neurotransmitters – the chemicals released by brain cells to communicate with each other – and therefore process information effectively. Protein also prevents surges in blood sugar which can increase hyperactivity.

**Protein regulates blood sugar.** Did you know that protein prevents those surges in blood sugar which can increase hyperactivity? Simple carbs raise blood sugar, causing the body to produce insulin, which can cause hyperactivity, disruption in attention, and a lack of focus. But protein helps level out blood sugar and helps keep kids calmer. No more Pop-Tarts® and sugary cereal for breakfast!

**Protein makes a better breakfast and snack.** Great sources of protein include eggs, nuts, beans, peanut butter, protein rich cereals, granola, Greek yogurt, pumpkin seeds, lean meats, and oatmeal made with milk, or breakfast milk shakes with yogurt, peanut butter and bananas.

**A**

**Activity keeps you alert.** If your child can't sit still, is forgetful, or can't seem to get organized, exercise may be the cure. Engage the body and you'll engage the brain of a child with ADD, ADHD, or sensory struggles. Even 20 minutes of exercise can greatly improve your child's attention, ability to understand, and memory skills.

**Activity helps more than just attention.** Exercise raises the brain's dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin levels, three hormones that many kids with ADD and ADHD lack. And because these chemicals are essential for regulating mood and pleasure, adding activity to your day greatly improves attitude. There's no better way to keep kids upbeat than to give them time to move!

**Activities should be fun and frequent and used during learning!** Engage your child's body during the learning process and they'll remember more. It doesn't have to be complicated! Bounce a tennis ball against the garage while practicing spelling lists; jump on a trampoline while doing multiplication drills; play hopscotch addition, etc. Keep it fun and keep them moving!

# S

**Sensory overload negatively impacts behavior.** Children with ADHD or sensory struggles often cannot regulate their bodies and brains throughout the day. This often looks like a lack of self-control, inability to cope, or hyperactivity. At times they may seem overloaded and thus avoid sensory experiences like food textures or fabrics; other times they may seek out sensory experiences like loud noises and movement.

**Sensory activities provide the input a child needs to feel calm and sets them up to learn.** Sensory activities engage the brain, helping it to regulate and release calming hormones. Engage your child in activities that include sensory input before you expect them to sit still or take on a new challenge. Involving your child's whole body in the learning process results in better memory, focus and enjoyment.

**Sensory activities should be fun and incorporate all 5 senses.** Think sight, smell, sound, touch and taste. Mix it up! Use a variety of textures, smells, and even foods in the learning process. Sort, add, subtract items such as candy; practice sorting by size and color using felt pom-poms; write spelling words in pudding, cinnamon and sugar, or wet sand; use Play-Doh for writing and letter forming; paint math problems using Q-tips®.

# T

**Timing is everything.** Choosing when your child wakes up, goes to sleep, learns, exercises, and eats meals and snacks all have an impact on their ability to regulate, calm and cope, and affects their mood. While schedules may not be easy to implement or stick to, they are crucial to helping children with learning struggles.

**Timing and schedules help children know what to expect.** Schedules give a child a sense of security, help them to transition and cope, and help them to better understand the world around them. Schedules are also important for developing organization and memory skills that are essential for the real world.

**Timing should be based on your child's routine and needs.** Each child is different. Base their daily schedule and routine around their unique needs and interests, as well as your family requirements. However, a few life rules apply to every child: get adequate sleep and good nutrition, make time for exercise, use a schedule or daily plan, and talk about any changes to the schedule early and often. For younger children, a picture schedule can help them to transition and reduce anxiety around expectations and the day's events. For older children, a simple daily schedule or plan on their iPad or phone will set them up for success.



# PAST Tips and Tools

<h2>Protein</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No simple carbs that raise blood sugar.</li> <li>• No less than 14 grams of protein per meal, 6 per snack.</li> <li>• Eat protein before and during learning.</li> <li>• Try nuts, Greek yogurt and granola, pumpkin seeds, lean meats, trail mix, banana and peanut butter, protein shake.</li> </ul>
<h2>Activity</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity releases brain and body calming hormones.</li> <li>• Make activities enjoyable and based on what your child loves to do.</li> <li>• Be active before AND during learning.</li> <li>• Jump rope, climb stairs on all fours, skateboard on belly, swing.</li> </ul>
<h2>Sensory</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensory activities should appeal to all 5 senses.</li> <li>• Touch, smell and taste are often “forgotten” senses.</li> <li>• Try sensory input before learning, like a deep pressure massage.</li> <li>• Try cinnamon writing, Play-Doh letter forming, math with pretzels.</li> </ul>
<h2>Timing</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedules give kids security and reduce anxiety.</li> <li>• Include your child in planning their day.</li> <li>• Make picture schedules for young children.</li> <li>• Teach flexibility; include time for delays, struggles, and free time.</li> </ul>