

Sense-Ability and Awareness

Self-regulation using the senses

Healthy People, Healthy Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan Health Authority works in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, acknowledging Saskatchewan as the traditional territory of First Nations and Métis People.



Saskatchewan
Health Authority



Vision, Mission, Values and Philosophy of Care

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VISION

Healthy People, Healthy Saskatchewan

MISSION

We Care.

We work together to improve health and well-being; every day, for everyone.

VALUES

- **COMPASSION:** *We are caring.* We practice empathy. We listen actively to understand each other's experiences.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY:** *We are responsible.* We own each action and decision. We are transparent and have the courage to speak up.
- **RESPECT:** *We are collaborative.* We treat everyone with kindness, dignity, and empathy. We honour diversity and value each person as an individual.
- **EQUITY:** *We are committed to health equity.* We recognize that factors such as geographic location, culture, and background are key determinants of health outcomes. We embrace the diversity of our teams, and work to remove barriers to ensure all Saskatchewan residents and communities can access high-quality care.
- **SAFETY:** *We are aware.* We commit to physical, psychological, social, cultural and environmental safety. Every day. For everyone.

PHILOSOPHY OF CARE: Our commitment to a philosophy of Patient and Family Centred Care is at the heart of everything we do and provides the foundation of our values.



SHA Treaty Land Acknowledgement

Honouring Relationships with Indigenous People

We acknowledge that we are gathering on **Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10** (Cree, Dené, Assiniboine/Nakota and Saulteaux) territories and the **Homeland of the Dakota, Lakota and Métis**.

Recognizing this history is important to our future and our efforts to close the gap in health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples by knowing what the land and the traditional people of the land offer us.

www.saskhealthauthority.ca/trc

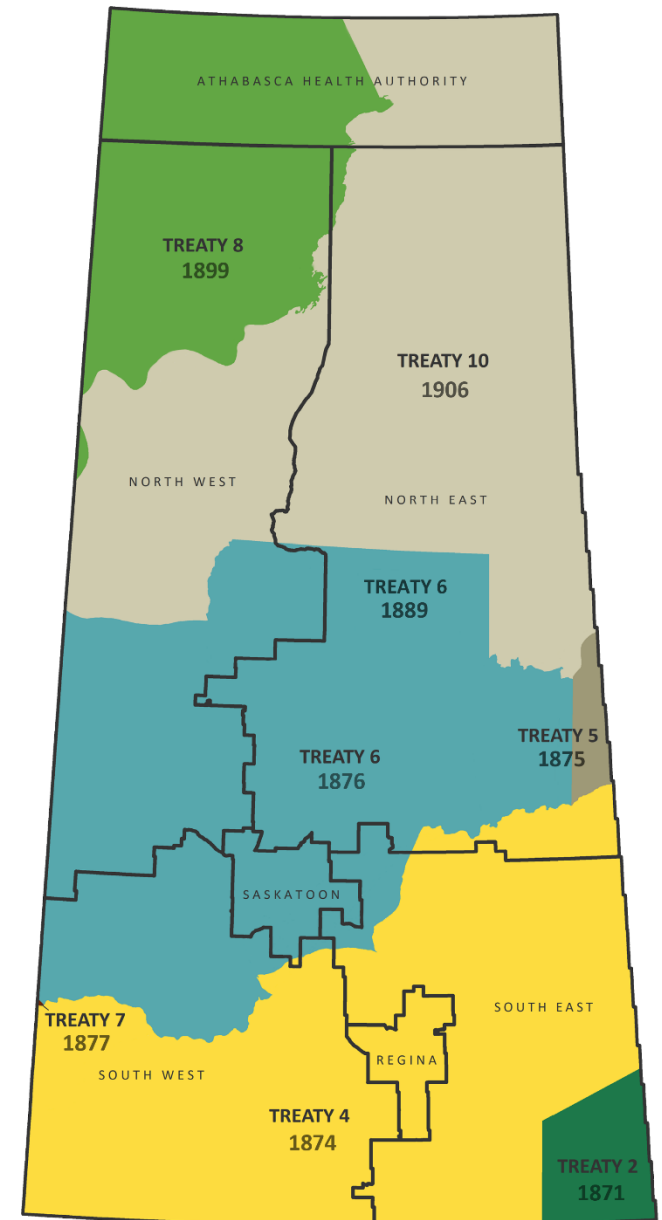


Saskatchewan
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Treaty Territories and Saskatchewan Health Authority Areas

Depictions of Treaty boundaries are subject to variation. These boundaries are usually not surveyed and are estimated based on written descriptions.

This map displays the Pre-1975 Treaties (Historic Treaties) in colour, as provided by Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.



AGENDA

- Introductions
- Tuning-in Activity
- What is self-regulation
- Why the senses
- Interoception
- Upregulating and downregulating
- Sensory kit and comfort space
- Wellness planning

INTRODUCTIONS

- Ashley Springer
- Occupational Therapist, Community Mental Health and Addictions Services, Saskatchewan Health Authority
- Utilize sensory strategies every day for myself, with individuals, and in group settings

INTRODUCTIONS

Safe Space

- The activities are an open invitation to try, not something you have to do
- Tune into your own experience and what you are needing in this moment

TUNING-IN ACTIVITY

Join if you'd like!

- I invite you to just take a moment to tune in to:
 - What you can hear
 - What you can see
 - What you can feel
 - What you can smell or taste
 - Notice what feels OK or comfortable while tuning in
 - How do you know this feels OK or comfortable?

SELF-REGULATION

What it means

- All day every day, we do things that change our level of alertness based on the activities we are wanting and needing to do
- We also do things to help manage our emotions and other internal experiences
- We are not always aware of the things we are doing, but can become more aware and add more intentional strategies

SELF-REGULATION

What it means

- Sometimes things will be comfortable or uncomfortable, and some things we do will be down-regulating, some will be up-regulating
- The goal is to be able to match our alertness to the situation and activities, and also find comfort in the discomfort, so that we can do the things that matter
- Calm is over-rated! We can learn to feel safe with whatever state we are in

WHY THE SENSES?

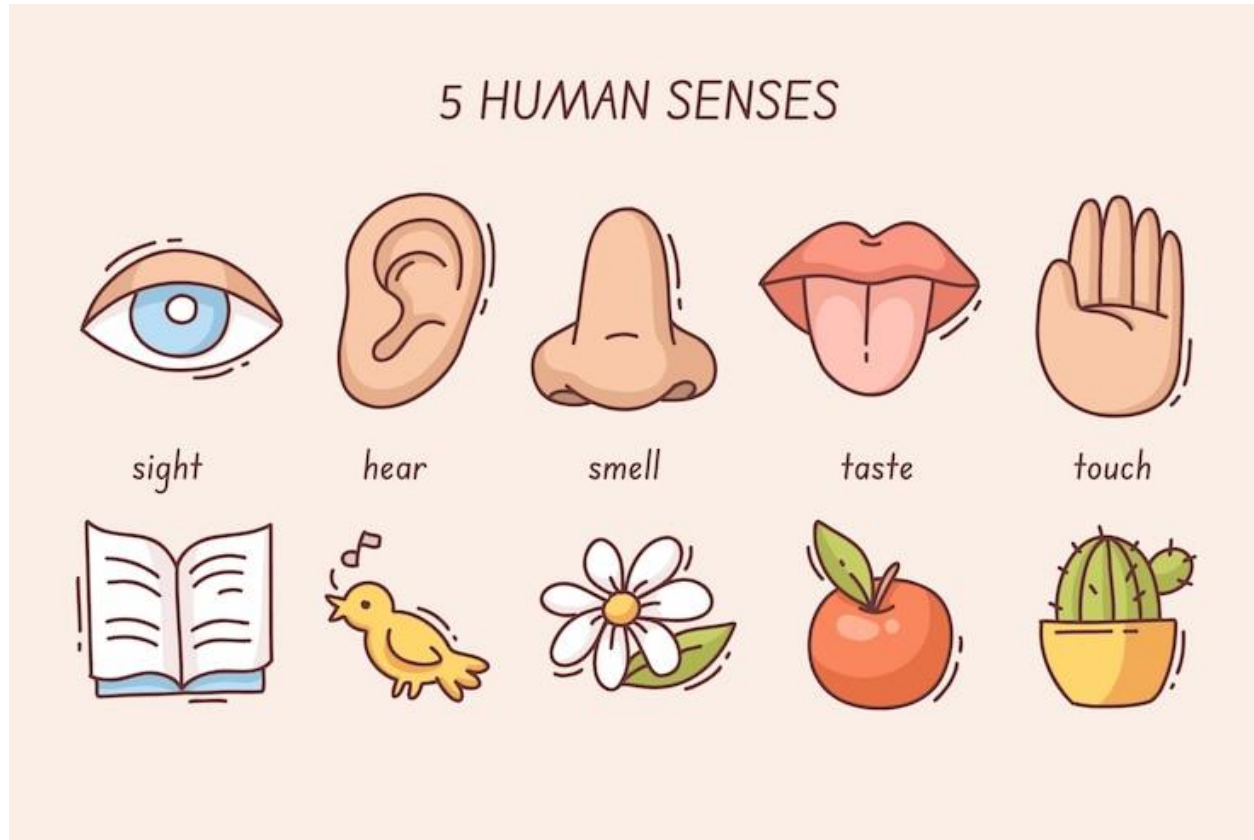
- Involved in everything we do, all day, every day, including:
 - Sense of safety
 - Self-regulation, including managing our emotions
 - Attachment and relationships with others
 - Human development (social and emotional abilities, sensory and movement abilities, relating to others, being able to think, plan, organize, and all those other things we do with our brains)
 - Trauma processing and healing
 - Overall health and wellness
 - Occupational participation (doing all the things we want to do, need to do, and are expected to do)
 - Being able to understand and respond to our own body signals in a helpful way
 - Being able to communicate our needs and get those needs met

WHY THE SENSES

- How we understand and react to our senses is strongly influenced by our nervous system, development, and our daily experiences
- Using our bodies can help influence our thoughts and emotions, making it easier to do important activities
- There is no right or wrong way to experience our senses – it is very individual

WHAT ARE THE SENSES

Commonly Known



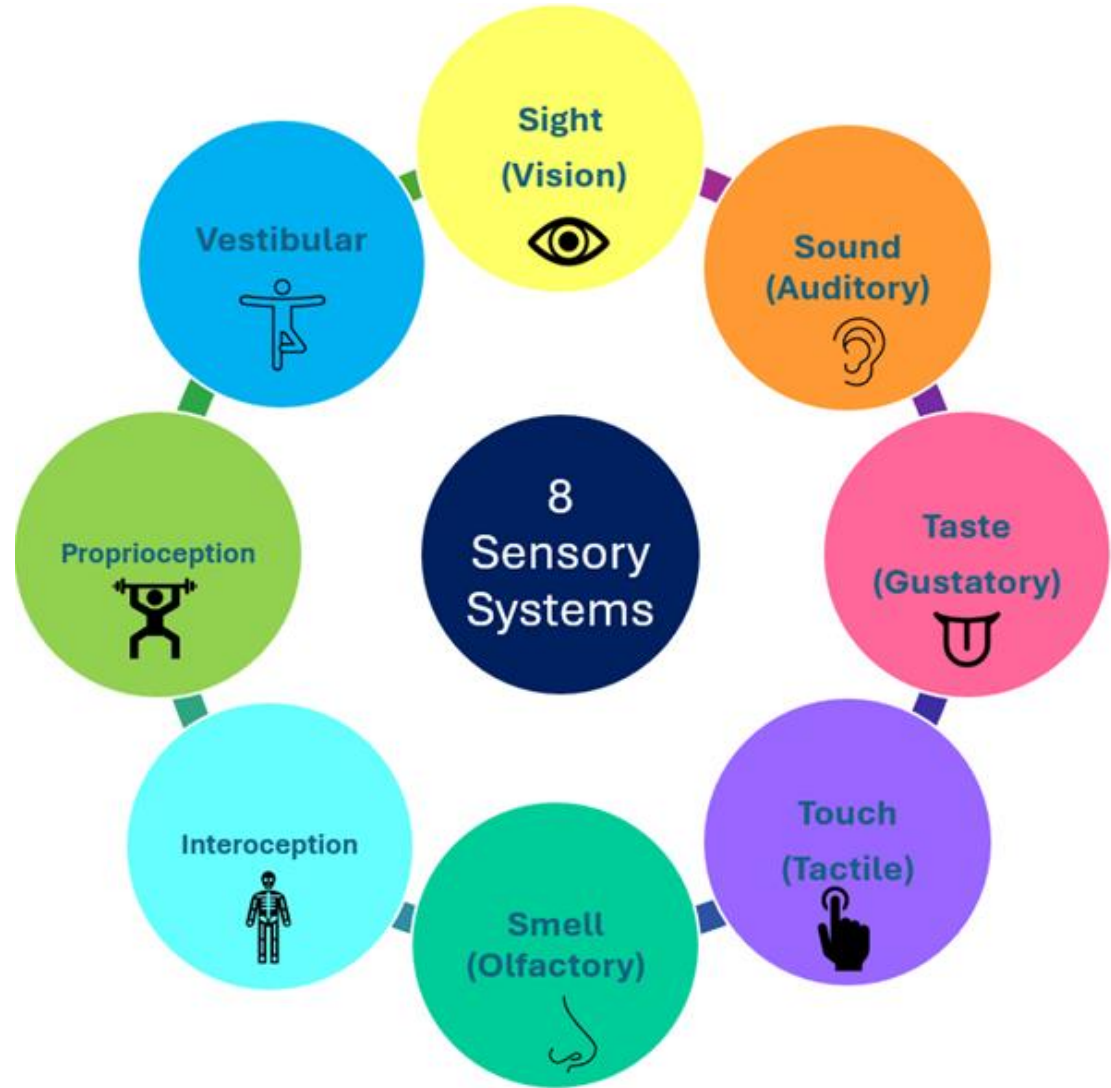
WHAT ARE THE SENSES

Other Important Senses

- Interoception
 - Internal sense of what is happening in our bodies
- Proprioception
 - Sense of where our bodies are in space, helps with movement and positioning
- Vestibular
 - Sense of balance, also helps with movement and spatial orientation

WHAT ARE THE SENSES

8 Sensory Systems



INTEROCEPTION

Key Components

- The building blocks for everything we do
- Involves being aware of our bodies, our emotions, and knowing what our minds and bodies might need
- Includes everything that we can feel in our body, including sensations of hunger, thirst, tiredness, as well as experiencing emotions of anxiety, happiness, frustration, etc

INTEROCEPTION

Examples

- Tuning into and describing bodily sensations
 - Fidgety hands, foggy brain, fast heart
- Pairing body signals with emotions
 - Sweaty palms + fast heart + nauseous stomach = anxiety
- Feel-good Activities
 - Tired brain + growling stomach + heavy body = hungry = EAT!

INTEROCEPTION

Inviting Curiosity

- Comfortable vs Uncomfortable
 - What happens when we think of things as good/bad or positive/negative?
 - Chair Example
- Invites openness and curiosity
 - We can even learn to just sit with what is at times, and know we don't need to change anything right away
 - Ex. I notice my hands feel dirty, this is uncomfortable, but I can wash them once I am done gardening
 - Ex. I notice I am experiencing frustration right now. It is uncomfortable, but it makes sense in the situation, and I can take some deep breaths to help feel more comfortable



INTEROCEPTION

Important Because...

- If we aren't tuning into our bodies and emotions, it can be difficult to know what we need to be regulated, or to know what regulated feels like
- All emotions and sensations serve a purpose and may be trying to tell us something important about our situation

INTEROCEPTION

Build It!

- We all have interoception, and we can all improve our interoceptive awareness
- Activity Experiments
 - I invite you to try some with me!
- Mindful moments
 - Tune into body and emotions while doing different activities each day
 - Ex. Doing chores, showering, eating, playing with kids/grandkids, petting an animal, enjoying a leisure activity, etc

INTEROCEPTION

Putting It Together

Body Sensation(s)	Intensity	Emotion(s)	Situation	Comfortable or Uncomfortable	Feel-Good Activity
Growling stomach, Irritated brain	Medium	Hungry	Lunch time	Uncomfortable	Eat
Tight chest, Fast brain, Fidgety hands, Pacing feet, Antsy muscles	Medium	Anxious	Starting a new therapy group	Uncomfortable	Go for a walk, notice breath, listen to music
Loose muscles Focused brain Talking voice Loose toes Non-antsy muscles	Low	Calm, relaxed	Hanging out with my dogs	Comfortable	Pet dogs, notice breath, notice surroundings



FEEL-GOOD ACTIVITIES

Examples

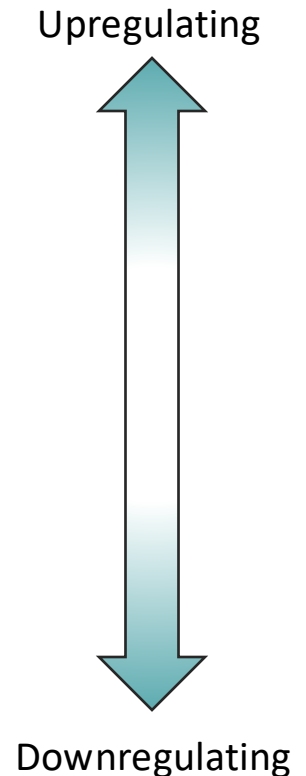
Walking	Rocking	Stretching	Dancing	Yoga	Play a sport
Help others	Listen to music	Nature sounds	Sit in the quiet	Watch a favorite video	Spend time in nature
Look at pictures	Do a word puzzle	Pat/play with a pet	Hugs	Wrap up in a blanket	Enjoy warm bath/shower
Hand massage	Stress ball or fidget	Use a favorite lotion	Savor a favorite food/drink	Chew gum	Enjoy a crunchy snack
Smell cologne/perfume	Smell flowers	Get fresh air	Notice breath	Deep breathing	Blow bubbles
Draw	Paint	Colour	Create	Phone someone	Video chat
Journal/write	Organize your space	Schedule time for feel-good activities	Create a routine	Wear favorite clothes	Play games



UP- and DOWNREGULATING

What it means

- Upregulating = increasing level of alertness, higher energy, more activated
 - Ex. Drinking cold water, doing 10 jumping jacks, listening to upbeat music
- Downregulating = decreasing level of alertness, lower energy, less activated
 - Ex. Hand massage, petting a pet, watching a sunset, enjoying a warm bath
- On a continuum based on activities during the day



UP- and DOWNREGULATING

Examples

- Tired in the morning – what do I need, and what could I use?
- Preparing for playing a basketball game – what do I need, what could I use?
- Getting ready for bed – what do I need, what could I use?
- Afternoon slump at work – what do I need, what could I use?

SENSORY TOOLS

Examples

Potentially Downregulating			Potentially Upregulating		
Smell of lavender	Classical music	Nature sounds	Upbeat music	Exercise	Drink water
Sipping tea	Hand massage	Petting an animal	Spicy food	Sour candy	Bright lights
Wrap in blanket	Rocking	Gentle Stretching	Fidgets	Dancing	Holding/chewing ice
Deep breathing	Meditate	Read	Smell of citrus	Chewing gum	Crunchy foods
Do a puzzle	Color or artwork	Warm bath	Walking	Watching videos	Playing games
Stress ball	Picture books	Worry stones	Singing/humming	Cleaning	Fresh air
Hard candy	Scented lotion	Weighted items	Splash cold water on face	Solving riddles	Carbonated drinks



PLANNING FOR SENSORY TOOL USE

- Having helpful items that are easily accessible will make it more likely you will use them
- Can have a theme or multiple uses:
 - anxiety management, sleep, sobriety, stress management, driving
- Can be in a box, bag, purse, small carrying case – you pick!

PLANNING FOR SENSORY TOOL USE

Comfort Space

- A space that you can go to help you regulate and feel more well before or after uncomfortable events, or to just relax in
- Can be a chair, a room, or even a place in nature
- Include a variety of sensory tools that are easily accessible
 - Changeable lighting, comfy spot to sit, fidgets, favorite scents, puzzle books, pictures



WELLNESS PLANNING

Putting things to use

- Practice noticing and naming body signals and emotions
- Use language such as “comfortable or uncomfortable”
 - What helps you feel more well or more comfortable? Can you be OK with some discomfort?
- What tools are upregulating and when might you need them? Downregulating?
- Plan time to use comfortable, feel-good activities more often
 - Plan them into your day, make them routine
 - Have tools readily available to use as needed, but also practice using them even when feeling regulated
 - Over time, your nervous system will thank you!

Thank- you!

