

WHY YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT INTEROCEPTION AND THE IMPACT ON THE KIDS YOU KNOW

Did you know why you need routine drink, toilet & snack breaks for children with ASD, ADHD & SPD?

Interoception refers to the ability to perceive and understand your internal sensations and emotions. This occurs through receptors located throughout your body which communicate to your brain.

When the interoceptive system is working properly, you are motivated to take action to restore your balance and help you feel more comfortable. For example, if you get thirsty - you get a drink; if you feel cold - you get a sweater; if you feel anxious - you seek comfort. Simply, interoception is your urge to act.

For children with sensory processing issues, the brain can't understand the sensory information their body is sending them meaning they are not able to identify their feelings. This often results in a sense of frustration, as they can't locate their feeling of discomfort, and can cause meltdowns.

To tackle this, I highly recommend you introduce routines. These will accommodate for a child who doesn't necessarily 'know' they are hungry, thirsty or need the toilet. It will also minimise discomfort and put them in a better mood. Think of yourself when you're hungry, thirsty or need the toilet; does it affect you emotionally? In my experience, often sending a child to have a drink, go to toilet or eat something can prevent a meltdown. Therefore, I encourage you to create set routines for drinks, snacks and the toilet, as, whilst they can be challenging and time consuming to set up they are incredibly rewarding for everyone.

People with ASD are often THIRSTY! Why?

- ✓ They may not recognise thirst signals
- ✓ They can't ask for a drink or are unsure when to ask for a drink (have to be reminded)
- ✓ Worried about using toilets outside of home
- ✓ Find school drinking fountains dirty/overwhelming or difficult to use
- ✓ Are stressed/anxious - anxiety increases thirst
- ✓ Are on medication which increases thirst
- ✓ Eat a VERY dry diet (biscuits, crackers, chips)



Some strategies:

- ✔ Schedule in set times for a drink (before/after play, every time go to toilet)
- ✔ Have a drink available on their desk at school or easy access in car/home
- ✔ Send for a drink when showing signs of anxiety (ie: humming, asking questions, talking about special interest, starting to shutdown)
- ✔ Monitor water intake. Maybe see how much other children drink and ensure having same amount or more
- ✔ Have drink before and after eating
- ✔ Ask parents how they drink at home, how often drink, if prompted or remember, and what they drink from (special cup, etc)



TOP 10 TIPS FOR TOILET TRAINING

- 1 Avoid potties!** Start out with the end in mind. Children with autism have trouble generalising and the last thing you want is to have to carry their pottie around with you everywhere you go!
- 2 Visuals are very important.** Make up some visual schedules to help the child understand the toileting process and to provide a prompt.
- 3 Prepare lots of FUN activities to do with the child.** Making going to the toilet fun takes the pressure off and makes it a motivating place to go.
- 4 Rewards are one of the most important elements of toilet training** - children need a motivator as it is too easy to continue to go in their nappy. Rewards need to be instant and powerful. Reward IMMEDIATELY and consistently.
- 5 Base yourself in or right next to the toilet** for the first few days of toilet training. Have as many home comforts in the room for the child to make it a fun environment.
- 6 Remove nappies.** Once you start toilet training do not let the child put on any form of nappy until they go to bed at night. If you let them wear them during the day at all they will learn to hold on until they are in their nappy.
- 7 Toilet time** - put the child on the toilet every 30 minutes for 10 minutes at a time, increasing time as they get the hang of it.
- 8 Teach the child the whole steps of toileting** - including putting on underpants, flushing the toilet and washing hands.
- 9 Some children may have sensory sensitivities** related to toileting. Sensory sensitivities need to be respected and worked on.
- 10 Create good routines around toilet timing.** Have set times when the child must go to the toilet.

TOP TIPS FOR TOILET TRAINING:

By Sue Larkey and Jo Adkins

A guide for parents and professionals toilet training children with autism spectrum disorder.

Contents include: When to start toilet training, getting started, the use of rewards, techniques, dealing with accidents, sensory issues, bowel motions, generalising, night time training, frequently asked questions, pages of visuals all ready for you to cut out and use! And lots more! 60 pages of helpful hints and ideas.

If you know children still in Nappies past 4 years of age, please consider this best selling resource.

- CODE B17 \$29.95 (plus P & H)

