



Creating a Sensory Room

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Creating a Sensory Space

How to Build a Sensory Room

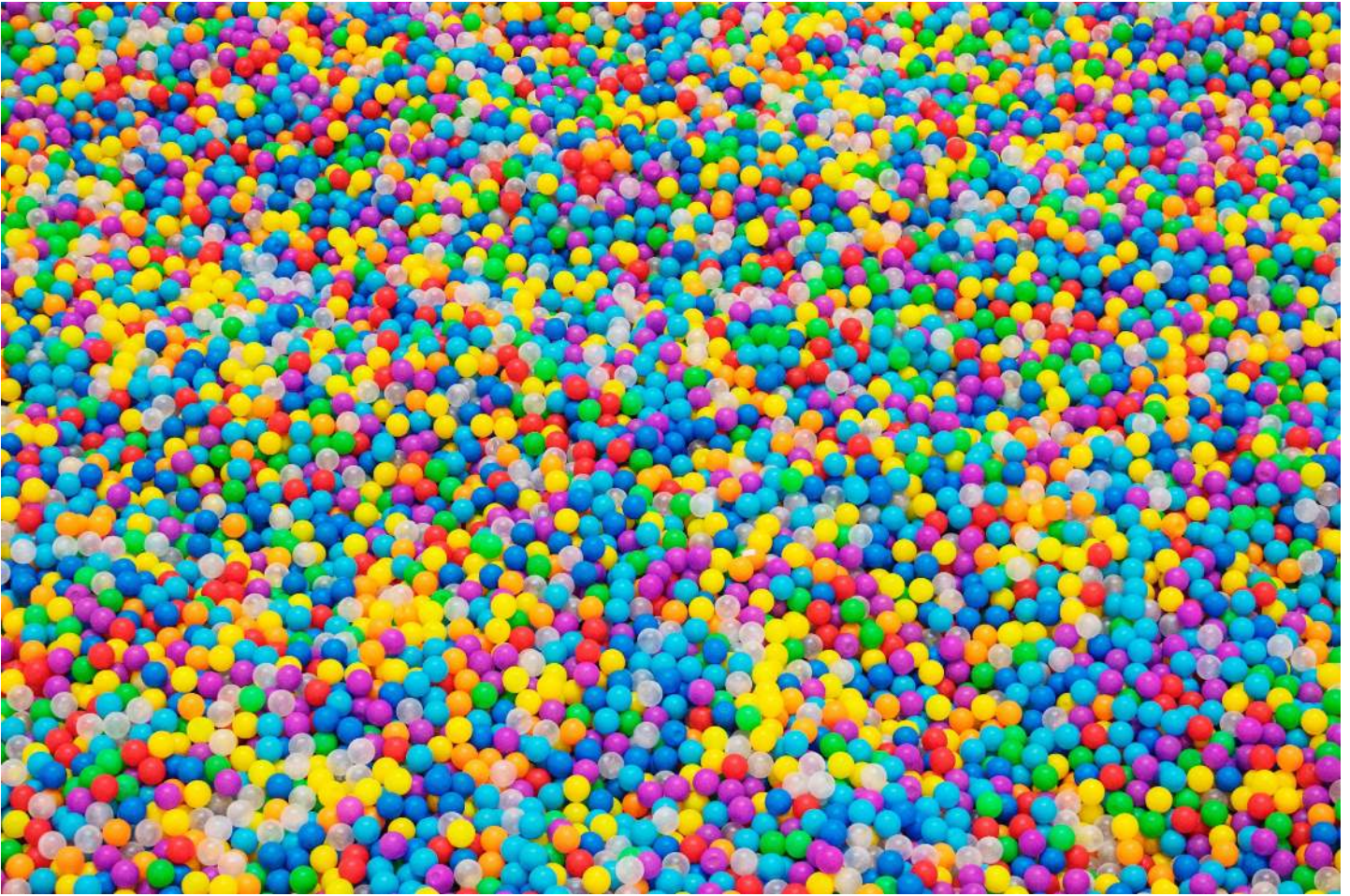
Building a sensory room is a fun and exciting adventure. The goal of the sensory space is to provide exploratory and impactful activities that are stimulating, relaxing or both. Stimuli is taken in through the five senses: gustatory/taste, olfactory/smell, tactile/touch, auditory/hearing, and visual/sight. Sensory information is also processed by two other senses: proprioception (joint sense of motion) and vestibular (balance/spinning). The central nervous system responds by speeding up, slowing down or normally/calmly to the new input. The normal response to stimuli taken in from the environment by the nervous system is known as self-regulation. Therefore, when designing the room, a person must identify which of the following is the goal for the space:



- Dial up the nervous system – speed up the body to promote an increased hyper-response
- Dial down the nervous system – slow the body down to promote a calming hypo-response

Sensory input to the body can be characterized according to the goal. If the goal is to dial/speed up the nervous system, activities are delivered using fast music, motion, dancing, spinning, rocking, bouncing, jumping, etc. This input is alerting to the body and can be combined with fast beat music and brighter lights. Children can utilize YouTube fast dancing videos, exercise and aerobic workouts to help speed the nervous system up. The adult in the room should use an upbeat volume and tone of voice.

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If the goal of the space is to dial down the nervous system, activities that promote calm responses include slow paced activities such as rolling, slow bouncing on a ball combined with joint compressions, weighted items applied (vest, lap buddy, heavy blankets), therapy ball activities, rocking, bouncing, and rolling. Compression to the body as a tight hug, compression vest, therapy ball presses, or sandwiching between a mat and a heavy blanket while are all calming activities. The lights should be dim, low or off. There is an option to use light covers or fire-resistant gossamer as a cover. The ceiling can also be decorated using dark colors such as blue, gray, or purple items. The music utilized in the space should be slow, rhythmic and lighter tones such as classical music, nature sounds, yoga or meditation style. The adult in the room should use a lower voice and speak in a calming manner.

