

Therapeutic Go Bag

Use: To have with you in order to give you tools to connect with your child and help them regulate. You use simple items in order to direct play in a way that supports their need for connection and to help their body learn to calm down. These tools can also be used in conjunction with Theraplay, please see a therapist for training or seek out more information via their website <https://theraplay.org>.

When considering what goes into your “Therapeutic Go Bag” please think of the senses and the ones that your child is the most sensitive to. If they enjoy smelling things, then this would be good to add to your Go Bag. If they hate strong smells, you may want to stay away from this.

What works for one child will not necessarily work for another. Your “Therapeutic Go Bag” should not look exactly like the next person’s. It should fill the needs of your life and the needs of your child’s. We will give you a list of items that work well, consider what works for you and enjoy having a new tool to help your child regulate.

Choosing your Go Bag:

Get a bag or backpack that is the right size for taking on a trip. It should be large enough to hold your items and yet small enough that you could easily pick it up on the go. This bag or backpack should also be durable and washable. Inner and outer pocket can also help in keeping it organised!

Sight: Bright coloured items. Think balloons, face paint, books with pictures to seek and find, small puzzles, a blinking light that spins, mirror, binoculars, liquid timers. Consider what may be interesting to look at and add it to your bag.

Sound: whistles (do this only if you do not mind the sound!), wax paper, kazoo, bubble wrap, recordable buttons with a short song or word (these can be found on amazon), fart slime or putty, small toys that make noise when held or squeezed, tearing paper. For sound you can also use your voice, talking, songs and funny noises.

Smell: scratch and sniff stickers, scented rubber balls, a piece of cloth with your perfume or aftershave on it, car air-freshener (this would be a single use item and good for car trip), comforting smell for them (this may even be something very smelly, offensive to you but comforting to them), lotion with a scent, body spray

Touch: a book with texture on its pages, foil, playdough, feather, sandpaper, fiddle toys that click or are stretchy, slime, heat or cold packs, blue tac, crushing paper, lotion, water. Think of anything that can be touched and if it is cool, hot, scratchy, smooth.

Taste: Small bag of crisps, crackers, cookies, fruit chews, gum, lolly. When you choose items for taste it is good to remember what takes a long time to finish? Is it sour, salty or sweet? Does your child like them? Finding foods that take a long time to chew or suck are helpful in working the facial muscles and are better at helping the child calm down.

All items in the go bag need to be age appropriate according to behaviour and ability. You would not add gum into a bag for a child that cannot chew gum safely. If your child is unable to keep themselves safe with self-reflection, then a mirror would not be the right choice. Your child who is 12 years old chronologically may be 4 years old behaviourally. You would need to consider their behavioural age when filling your bag.

How do you use it? When you see that a trigger is coming up, something difficult for them, you use it. Give them something to help them calm down. When they are becoming dis-regulated due to a stressor, you can hand them a lolly which works their muscles and re-directs their attention. Blowing up a balloon has them taking deep breaths which is calming. Tearing paper can be very therapeutic from the sound to the smell of it. The act of tearing the paper is also physical and can help them expend some energy which is also calming.

Other tools for your Therapeutic Go Bag.

Straws, pencils, pens, pad of paper, cups, bubbles...there are so many things that can go in!

Just use your imagination and see what works for you and your children. Look online for sensory toys, there are many different places online to help you find fidget toys and give you other ideas on what to add.

Seek out information on autism and sensory items. Your imagination (and what can fit in your bag) is your only limitation. Keep it fun, keep it safe, and keep it behaviour age appropriate.