



HANDS-ON HYPERAROUSAL WORKSHOP: WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE HYPERAROUSED!

This activity is hands on and designed to help others realize what learning and life is like if you have significant sensory defensiveness.

Here is how we organize the activity. We break the crowd into small groups made up of three. However, First, we number off the large group: one two three, one two three...etc. Each small group will have a 1, a 2 and a 3. We provide instruction to all of the **ones**, then all of the **two's** and finally all of the **threes**. You need to provide this instruction in 'secret' (in a huddle) so that the 2's and 3's don't know what the 1's will be doing, and so on.

The **ones** are assigned the role of the "child". They are simply going to experience what the 2's and 3's are doing to them and respond as they will. They don't have to 'act'.

The **two's** are what we call the **POA** or Person Of Authority. This is the person who will be giving a set of instructions to the 1 in the group (the child). The POA asks the child to answer some questions, and perform some simple actions - for example: tell me your name, social security number, turn around three times, subtract 7 from 15, and jump up. It can be any set of two or three things that you dream up.

The **three's** in the group are the 'environment' and in this case they are an exaggerated, overwhelming environment. They are to GET in the FACE and SPACE of the child (#1). They can touch them, tickle, blow, make noise, play with their hair, spin them about, etc., just BOTHER them and don't stop, regardless of what the POA is doing.

You have the groups begin on your command, and then do this for a minute or so. You should expect the noise level in the room to be deafening. After about three minutes of this, tell them to stop. They will still be very loud and chatty as they should be very "aroused" neurologically. Then ask them to process what it was like - what was it like for the **ones**, then **twos** then **threes**. Some questions to ask:

- ONES-were you able to follow the directions clearly and concisely?
-did you fall into to "fear, fight or flight" mode? Tell us more...
- TWOS-how did YOU feel telling the child to complete something he was unable to do?
- THREES-describe what it was like for you to watch all this transpire.

After processing the exercise, ask participants to describe what THEY think might work to change the situation... what makes THEM feel good when they've had a "bad" day or are overwhelmed. Then from there you can move into the parallel that what the participants do when they are overwhelmed is essentially a "sensory diet" (don't forget to add all the oral experiences we participate in to calm and organize ourselves).

This experience as has proved to be extremely helpful in IEP meetings etc. Please share it with others who you know might benefit from it.