

Interoception

Interoception is our EIGHTH sense:

1. Sight	5. Hearing
2. Smell	6. Proprioception
3. Taste	7. Vestibular
4. Touch	8. Interoception

What is Interoception?

Interoceptive awareness can be broadly defined as the conscious perception of an internal bodily state, for example, one's heart beating and breathing. These senses are related to emotional experiences. Awareness of both biological and emotional internal body cues are impacted in individuals who are affected by trauma, including intergenerational trauma, and neurodevelopmental disabilities including the autism spectrum (Schauder, Mash, Bryant, & Cascio, 2015, Mahler, 2016).

What is an interoception activity?

An interoceptive activity focuses on creating and noticing a change in some aspect of one's internal self, such as, one's **muscular system, breathing, temperature, pulse or touch**. Students/children/adults with poor Interoception are not able to identify the physiological changes that signal mood changes or bodily self-regulation needs. Interoception activities teach us to connect with these.

Structure of an Interoception Activity

- An interoceptive activity focuses on a particular part of the body for at least 30 seconds.
- It enables a change to occur in one's body state while labelling the movement and part of the body involved (e.g. toes, stretch and curl up or curl under)
- **Repeat the same activity for a second time**
- The individual is encouraged to identify a **change** in their body state (e.g. hot-cold, soft-hard, stretch-relax) and where they felt that change (arch or ball of foot, on top



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Benefits of teaching interoception:

- To help children/students connect to and learn to understand their own bodies and emotions
- It is a pre-requisite skill for self-management and self-regulation. It provides children/students with the tools to know when they are developing emotional reactions and the skills to be in control of those reactions
- Without interoception, social skills are just the application of rules and not a meaningful way of interacting – it enables students to develop a sense of belonging
- Classrooms where interoception is being taught have decreasing behavioural challenges over the school year and those where it is not have static or increasing behavioural challenges (*school wide behaviour reporting analysis*)

How many times a day?

Interoception activities need to be completed at least **TWICE** a day **EVERY DAY**. The most common times to do an interoception activity are after a recess and lunch



Interoception Activity Example:

- Sitting down with your hands resting on your lap, notice how your hands feel when they are relaxed.
- Now stretch your fingers as wide apart as possible and hold them tense like that for 30 seconds.
- *What part of your hand could you feel the stretch?*
- We are going to repeat the activity again and when we stretch our fingers, this time we are going to focus on the webs of our fingers.
- **Repeat activity for the second time.**
- *How did the webs of your fingers feel? What did you notice?*