



ULSTER GAA

**GAMES
FOR ALL**

**SENSORY
SUPPORT
GUIDE**

CONTENTS

- Aim and Introduction
 - What is sensory play?
 - Why incorporate sensory activities/benefits?
 - How can we incorporate sensory activities?
 - Conclusion
-

AIM

To provide clubs with sensory ideas that can be included in Games for All hubs, All-Star sessions or summer camps to ensure that members of all abilities reach their full potential.

INTRODUCTION

Ulster GAA is fully committed to supporting clubs through change.

We have seen a rise in the amount of Games for All activity within clubs as they strive to become more inclusive.

The children attending Games for All sessions may have a range of needs.

“Games for All is a family of initiatives in the GAA encompassing Wheelchair Hurling and Camogie, Football for all, Fun and Run, “All Star” Inclusive clubs, Cúl 4 All / Cúl Eile Camps.” (GAA.ie)

WHAT IS SENSORY PLAY?

Sensory play is any activity or interaction that stimulates our senses – touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste.

It helps people interact with and make sense of the world that surrounds them.

Having a sensory area in your club or GAA club can be beneficial for children who are struggling with a training session, a crowd or for those who are overwhelmed.

Sensory processing is *“the ability to take in, sort out, process and make use of information from the world around us.”* (Ayres, 1979)

WHY INCORPORATE SENSORY ACTIVITIES?

Sensory activities play an important role in learning and development.

Much of our learning comes through our ability to use our senses to retain information.

Sensory provides opportunities for the following:

Using motor skills

Linguistic development

Solving problems

The five senses

Enjoyment

Recreational learning

Sensory play is a lot of fun, and also offers many benefits for development, including:

- Helping others understand how their actions affect what's around them.
 - Supporting brain development, enhancing memory, complex tasks and problem solving.
 - Developing fine motor skills through tactile play (colouring, playdough, poring etc).
 - Supporting language development, communication and social skills.
 - Encouraging creative and independent thinking.
 - Emotional regulation by providing a calming effect on children's
-

HOW CAN WE INCORPORATE SENSORY ACTIVITIES?

1. Sensory Trays/Bins

In a box, or container, place various objects with a variety of textures for a hands-on experience. This could be paper, kinetic sand and water or leaves, rocks and sand.

This doesn't have to be a large tray. Individual lunch boxes can be just as good and can be carried out to the pitch to training sessions in the event of a child becoming agitated.

You can use:

- Pasta
 - Rice
 - Small stones
 - Shredded paper
 - Soil
 - Orbeez
 - Leaves
 - Sand
 - Glitter
 - Kinetic sand
 - Toy animals
 - Small balls
 - Figurines
-

Sport sensory areas could also include footballs and sports balls of different sizes and textures.

Some examples of sensory bins/trays can be seen below:



2. Sensory/Calm Tent

A sensory/Calm tent can be beneficial for individuals who need sensory stimulation or who experience sensory overload.

By creating a safe and calming environment that provides sensory experiences, a sensory tent can help individuals to regulate their emotions, focus their attention, and engage their senses.

Links for some tents under £100 can be found below:

Sensory Tent



Two-person pop-up tent



Play tent for girls & boys



What do we need in a sensory tent?

- Small tent or tepee
- Fairy lights
- Sensory bottles (empty plastic bottles) filled with water and glitter
- Pop-it toys/fidget toys
- Textured materials in a bag. (small pieces of cut off material, embossed material, silk, rough, Velcro etc)
- Cushion or pillow
- Bubble tubes
- Calming scents
- Ear defenders
- Music
- Weighted blankets or toys
- Bean bags

Links for more sensory toys and equipment can be found below:

www.cheapdisabilityaids.co.uk/collections/cheap-sensory-toys

www.sensorytoywarehouse.com

www.sensorydirect.com/products/sensory-toys-and-games

3. Auditory Sensitivity

Like all of the senses, the auditory/hearing system can over-respond or under-respond to the area around us.

When this occurs, children respond in different or unusual ways than what we might expect. They may fatigue easily during activity or may constantly be in motion. Sensitivities to sounds may result in communication challenges and some children may become agitated and may need a calm space.

Hyper-responsiveness occurs when something is “too loud” or “too much” for the individual. They over-react to auditory input. This could occur when a child is playing outside and they react to a scream, a raised voice, a dog barking, or something like a passing vehicle. A child may need a calm area to move to, to help them to regulate their emotions again.

Activities that would help with auditory sensitivity:

- Listening to calming music in a quiet space
- Moving to a quiet area where there are some sensory toys
- Listening to water or calming nature sounds

4. Outdoor sensory area

Although most Games for All sessions will take place outside, it is a good idea to zone a quiet outside space to include active areas and quiet spaces as they may find a crowd overwhelming. In this space you could include:

- Hop scotch
 - Balls of different types
 - Cushions, pillows
 - Mat
 - Some portable sensory toys
-

CONCLUSION

Inclusion is at the heart of the ethos of Ulster GAA.

The GAA motto - '**Where We All Belong**' - means that everyone of all abilities should feel a sense of belonging.

It is our aim at Ulster GAA to continue to support clubs in this area.

We hope that the sensory support ideas in this document will help clubs to enhance their Games for All resources in a cheap and cost-effective way.
