

ENA'S NEURODIVERGENT ACADEMY

The Sensory Checklist

A quick visual guide to identifying overstimulation signs in kids and adults.

Overstimulation happens when the brain receives more sensory input (noise, light, touch, or social demands) than it can process at once. Recognizing the early signs of sensory overload is the most effective way to prevent a meltdown or shutdown. Use this checklist to identify triggers and intervene with compassionate support.

Common Signs of Overstimulation in Kids

- ☐ **Visual & Auditory Evasion:** Covering ears or eyes, hiding under furniture, or retreating to small, enclosed spaces.
- ☐ **Behavioral Shifts:** Sudden irritability, unexplained crying, aggressive outbursts, or uncharacteristic defiance.
- ☐ **Physical Restlessness:** Increased hyperactivity, fidgeting, pacing, or an inability to sit still.
- ☐ **Sensory Refusal:** Suddenly refusing to wear certain clothing (due to tags or seams) or rejecting familiar foods.
- ☐ **The "Zone Out":** Staring blankly, not responding to their name, or retreating inward (shutdown).

Common Signs of Overstimulation in Adults

- ☐ **Emotional Exhaustion:** Intense irritability, feeling 'on edge,' or snapping at loved ones over minor inconveniences.
- ☐ **Cognitive Fatigue:** Brain fog, inability to make simple decisions, or losing track of conversations.
- ☐ **Physical Symptoms:** Tension headaches, clenched jaw, nausea, or a sudden feeling of extreme fatigue.
- ☐ **The Urge to Flee:** A strong, sudden desire to escape the room, cancel plans, or isolate in a dark, quiet space.
- ☐ **Heightened Sensitivities:** Background noises (like chewing or humming appliances) or bright overhead lights suddenly feel physically painful.

THE "WHAT NOW?" INTERVENTION BOX

When you spot these signs, immediate de-escalation is key:

- **REDUCE INPUT:**

Dim the lights, turn off background noise/music, and lower your voice.

- **OFFER AN EXIT:**

Provide a judgment-free out ("Do you want to take a break in the quiet room for a few minutes?").

- **REGULATE THE BODY:**

Offer deep pressure (like a weighted blanket or firm hug, if requested), cold water, or a crunchy snack.

- **VALIDATE:**

Never dismiss the feeling. Say, "I know it's really loud in here, it's okay to feel overwhelmed."

Need more personalized strategies for your family?

Schedule a **Neurodivergent Coaching Consultation** with Coach E.N.A. to build a sensory profile and customized toolkit for your unique needs.

Enabling Neurodiverse Achievement — W.E.B. Family Solutions