

WELCOME TO YOUR SENSORY ROOM!



Sensory Rooms provide comfort for all students

These sensory-friendly spaces contain soothing elements like gentle lighting, comfortable seating, and stress management tools such as calming music, fidget spinners, and weighted blankets for students to use between classes.

Sensory-Friendly spaces promote inclusion and access

Sensory Rooms support neurodiverse students such as those with ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, or Sensory Processing Disorder, and increase awareness of disability justice on campus by promoting inclusion and prioritizing accommodation. They are among the top 5 requested accommodations. (1)

Sensory Rooms support self-regulation

A review of research on the use of Sensory Rooms in education from 2023 by Nickels concluded that when following a criteria of proper use of sensory room accommodations, students were 85% effective in sensory self-regulation and emotional de-escalation. (2)



Sensory Rooms are good educational practice

55% of UH Mānoa Peer and Benchmark Schools offer some form of Sensory-Friendly space on campus, and 22% of UH Mānoa Peer and Benchmark schools already have Sensory Rooms available. Other institutions such as NYU, Northwestern, and Boston University have Sensory Rooms on campus.



Sensory Rooms increase academic success

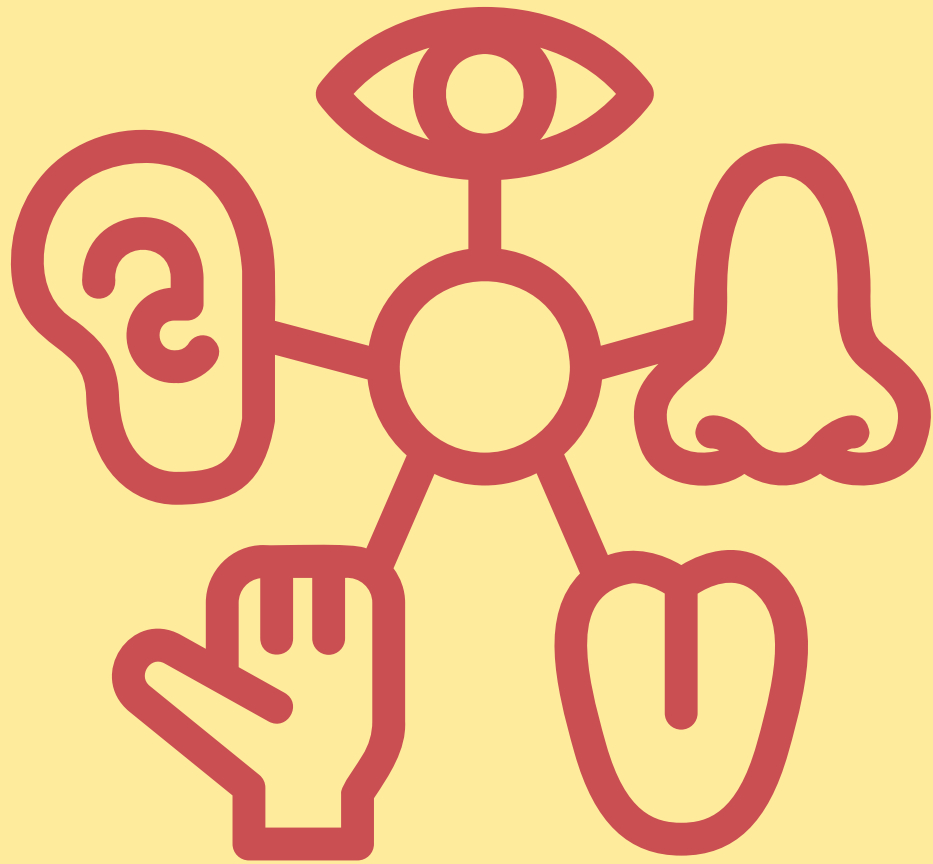
Students with access to supports for sensory and emotional regulation experience increased success with memory and cognitive function, information integration, and have higher rates of retention according to a 2007 study by Braxton, Brier and Steele. (3)



1. Sarrett, J. C. (2018). Autism and accommodations in higher education: Insights from the autism community. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 48, 679-693
 2. Nickels, L. (2023). A Wall for Wellness: Analyzing Sensory Room Usage Article 1: How Are Sensory Rooms Used Article 2: A Sensory Room Studied Article 3: A Practitioner's Guide to Creating and Implementing a Sensory Room. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
 3. Braxton, J. M., Brier, E. M., & Steele, S. L. (2007). Shaping retention from research to practice. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 9(3), 377-399. <https://doi.org/10.2190/CS.9.3.g>



SENSORY INTEGRATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION



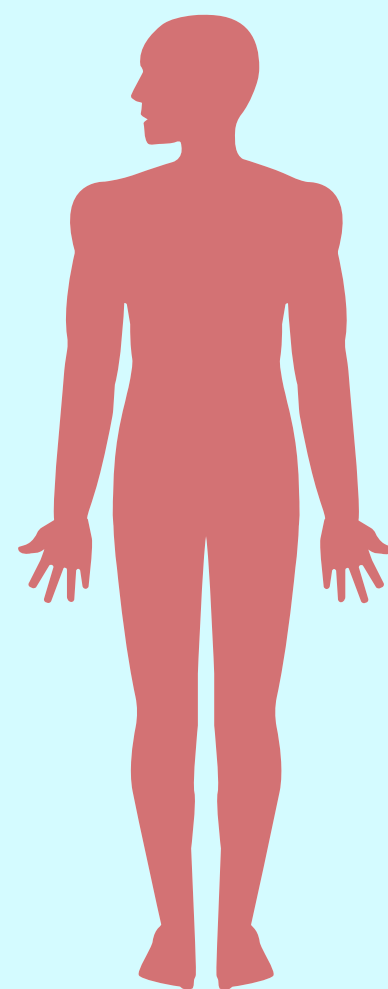
SEE
HEAR
SMELL
TOUCH
TASTE

“By enhancing and modifying the sensory environment pupils are able to adapt and improve responses and processing and therefore better able to engage in learning, relationships and everyday life.

Sensory integration is important for all aspects of school life, particularly participating, engaging and learning within a social, classroom environment.”
(1)

In higher education, accessible teaching that engages learners across a diverse range of multi-sensory experiences promotes

SENSORY INTEGRATION



Sensory integration refers to a person’s ability to process and respond to information and environmental stimuli

Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) is a condition that affects how the brain processes sensory stimuli

Sensory Processing challenges may manifest as anxiety, depression, inability to focus, intense emotions, motor impairment, lack of energy, hyperactivity, difficulty with self-regulation, and challenges with reading, writing or listening (1)(2)

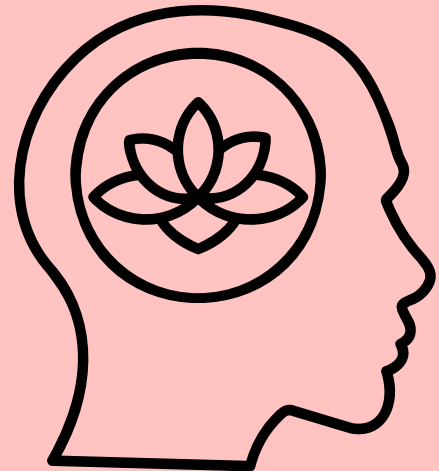
M
O
V
E

Incorporating movement and rhythms into learning activities helps to increase knowledge retention and improve overall memory function



BENEFITS OF SENSORY ROOMS IN HIGHER ED

(Revised August 12, 2025)



Sensory Rooms provide a relaxing environment for all students

In recent years, universities worldwide have increasingly recognized the role of sensory-friendly environments in supporting student mental health and well-being. (1) Research shows that comfortable, low-stimulation spaces where students can unwind and recharge contribute to reducing anxiety and fatigue, and improving academic productivity and well-being. (2)

Create inclusivity and connection for neurodiverse students

Neurodiverse students benefit from social spaces to connect with others. Social spaces are among the top requested accommodations. (3)

Enhanced sensory environments in Higher Education improve student responses and allow them to experience learning efficacy because sensory integration is important to all aspects of life, including learning. (6)

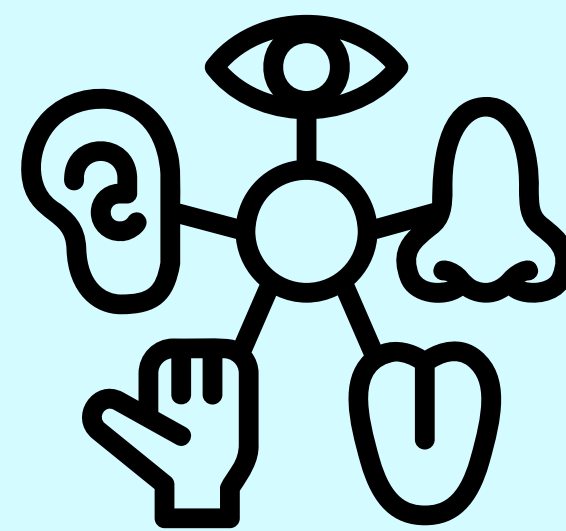
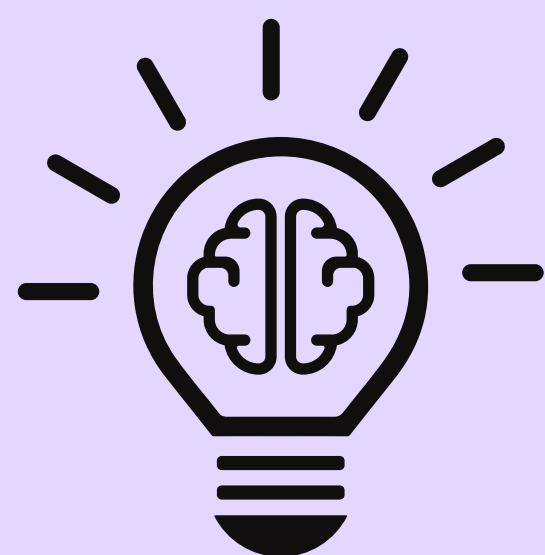
Increase Interest & motivation

A space for self-regulation and de-escalation

Studies show that Sensory Rooms are 85% effective in supporting sensory regulation and emotional de-escalation. (4) Allowing neurodiverse students opportunities to take a break from the stress of navigating neurotypical spaces and develop friendships can reduce reported feelings of loneliness and anxiety. (5)

Sensory spaces provide students with tools and strategies to support learning and knowledge retention. Studies have shown that these spaces meet a wide variety of school needs, beyond their intended use or target audience. (4)

Increase understanding and memory



Support sensory processing

Sensory health reduces anxiety and depression, improves focus, regulates emotions and hyperactivity, improves motor control and energy, and reduces challenges with reading, writing and listening. (6)

1. Baktash, H. (2023). The Role of Immersive Multi-Sensory Interior Design Environment in Reducing Students' Generalized Anxiety Disorder. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.
2. O'Connor, M., Jones, S. C., Gordon, C., & Joosten, A. (2024). Exploring Environmental Barriers and Facilitators to Inclusion on a University Campus for Autistic Students. *Autism in Adulthood*, 6(1), 36–46. <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2022.0053>
3. Sarrett, J. C. (2018). Autism and accommodations in higher education: Insights from the autism community. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 48, 679-693
4. Nickels, L. (2023). A Wall for Wellness: Analyzing Sensory Room Usage Article 1: How Are Sensory Rooms Used Article 2: A Sensory Room Studied Article 3: A Practitioner's Guide to Creating and Implementing a Sensory Room. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
5. Fabri, M., Andrews, P., & Pukki, H. (2016). A guide to best practice in supporting higher education students on the autism spectrum—for professionals within and outside of HE.
6. Thynne, R. (2021). *Behaviour Barriers and Beyond: Practical Strategies to Help All Pupils Thrive*. Taylor & Francis Group.



increase memory and motivation

support the processing of sensory information

create inclusivity

relax and reconnect

SENSORY ROOM BENEFITS

support students with ASD

support de-escalation

promote social connection

promote self-regulation

increase student retention

A brief video introduction to the sensory room:

