

SENSORY REGULATION MASTER GUIDE | **SWEET CHEEKS DOULAS**

Sensory regulation supports the nervous system by using external input (sound, texture, movement) to help the body feel safer, steadier, or more present. These tools are optional, adaptable, and meant to support—not override—autonomy.

Regulation is about choice and responsiveness, not control. If something doesn't feel right, we stop or switch.

WHEN TO USE

Helpful during:

- anxiety, panic, dissociation, shutdown, or agitation
- waiting periods (appointments, procedures, labor pauses)
- transitions (before/after visits, debriefs, documentation)
- postpartum overstimulation or numbness
- staff self-regulation between cases

Not a replacement for medical or mental health care.

CONSENT & SETUP (ALWAYS FIRST)

Try:

- “Would you like to try a sensory grounding option?”
- “We can stop anytime or change it.”
- “You choose what feels okay.”

A no is a complete answer.

SOUND REGULATION

Sound can soothe, orient, or provide containment. Keep volume low or adjustable.

NAME	AMBIENT OR NEUTRAL SOUND
BEST FOR	Anxiety, overwhelm
OPTIONS	White noise, rain, fan, distant waves
WHY	Predictable sound reduces nervous system scanning

NAME	FAMILIAR OR COMFORT SOUND
BEST FOR	Distress, vulnerability
OPTIONS	Favorite song, gentle playlist, familiar voice note
WHY	Familiarity increases safety.

NAME	RHYTHMIC SOUND
BEST FOR	Grounding during procedures or labor
OPTIONS	Metronome, steady drumbeat, heartbeat audio
WHY	Rhythm provides structure and containment.

NAME	VOICE ANCHORING
BEST FOR	Dissociation, fear

HOW	Calm, slow speech; name the moment and choices
EXAMPLE	“You’re here. It’s Tuesday. I’m with you.”

NAME	SILENCE AS REGULATION
BEST FOR	Overstimulation
NOTE	Silence can be grounding or activating—check in first.

TEXTURE & TACTILE REGULATION

Texture offers physical feedback that can bring the body into the present.

NAME	HANDHELD OBJECTS
BEST FOR	Anxiety, procedures
OPTIONS	Stone, cloth, stress ball, key
PROMPT	“Notice the weight or texture”

NAME	TEMPERATURE-BASED TOUCH
BEST FOR	Dissociation, numbness
OPTIONS	Warm mug, cool pack, warm blanket
WHY	Temperature contrast increases sensory clarity

NAME	FABRIC & PRESSURE
BEST FOR	Containment, reassurance

OPTIONS	Shawl, weighted lap pad, soft scarf
NOTE	Always ask before suggesting pressure.

NAME	SURFACE CONTACT
BEST FOR	Grounding
HOW	Feet on floor, back against chair, hands on thighs
PROMPT	"Notice what's happening you"

MOVEMENT REGULATION

Movement helps discharge energy or counter freeze/shutdown. Keep it small and optional.

NAME	MICRO-MOVEMENTS
BEST FOR	Restlessness, freeze
OPTIONS	Toe wiggles, shoulder rolls, jaw release

NAME	ROCKING OR SWAYING
BEST FOR	Self-soothing, postpartum
HOW	Gentle side-to-side or forward/back

NAME	GROUNDING STRETCH
BEST FOR	Tension
OPTIONS	Neck stretch, calf press, seated spinal twist

NOTE	Slow, no forcing

NAME	WALKING OR WEIGHT SHIFTS
BEST FOR	Agitation, racing thoughts
HOW	Short walk, shifting weight between feet
WHY	Bilateral movement supports regulation

MIX & MATCH OPTIONS

Combining senses can be powerful—with consent.

- **Sound & Texture** (soft music + blanket)
- **Movement & Texture** (rocking + weighted lap)
- **Voice & Surface Contact** (orientation + feet on floor)

WHEN A TOOL ISN'T WORKING

If distress increases:

- Stop immediately
- Switch to orientation (name the room/date/support)
- Ask what feels safest
- Involve CCC or escalate if needed

Grounding should reduce, not intensify distress

STAFF SELF-USE & TRANSITIONS

Staff are encouraged to use these:

- Before starting a shift
- After intense cases
- Before documentation
- During debriefs

Sustainable care requires regulated caregivers.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- Not all bodies respond the same
- No technique is universally calming
- Silence can be grounding
- Presence is often enough

You do not need to “fix” someone’s nervous system.

QUICK SCRIPT FOR STAFF

“We can try something with sound, touch, or movement—or we can just sit. What feels best right now?”