

Sensational OT Tip of the Month

Frustrated Child

Do you know children that ...

1. seem to have *huge* upset reactions over *small* problems?
2. avoid working in groups and isolate themselves?
3. do not accept assistance well from adults or peers?
4. avoid trying new things, or do not handle changes in schedule well?

These children may be unable to manage and regulate their emotions and become easily frustrated. They may shut down or have upset reactions. For some frustrated children, it may be a result of poor emotional regulation, whereas for other is may be due to poor praxis (poor motor planning). Being unable to motor plan unfamiliar tasks (new environments, new routines, new people, new demands) can cause a child to become frustrated.

Sensational ideas for a frustrated child

1. Provide visual schedules and supports to assist them in knowing what is coming next in their day.
2. Allow them to take a break to help calm their minds and bodies before a challenging task, or after an upset reaction. Heavy work and deep breathing are good strategies.
3. Break a challenging task into smaller steps. This allows the task to not seem overwhelming.
4. Determine a problem solving strategy that allows the child to express his or herself, as well as gain independence in regulating emotions. These strategies can be preventative, in the moment, or reflective to decrease frustration. Supportive strategies might be a “first, then” chart, a visual flow chart for problem solving techniques.
6. Set the child up with a strong “buddy” or peer to help with challenging transition times.

Ask the occupational therapist at your school if you are interested in more information. You can also go to: www.cintiOTinstitute.com/privateschools and scroll to the bottom left corner for more tip sheets.

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