



KENT
SCOUTS



Stim Toys & Sensory Toolkits

**A guide for adult volunteers
and Young Leaders**

WHAT IS STIMMING & WHAT ARE STIM TOYS?

What is stimming?

Stimming, stims, or self-stimulatory behaviour – if you want to be technical – are actions that a person does to soothe and regulate themselves. This is done in many different situations, from stressful and over-stimulating ones, like a very noisy scout hall, to casual and more calm ones such as talking with their friends.

Everybody stims in some way; as humans, we have many different senses; in turn, there are a fair few types of stimming.

Some types of stims are:

- Visual (sight)
- Olfactory (smell)
- Auditory (sound)
- Tactile (touch)
- Oral (taste and tactile)
- Vestibular (balance)
- Proprioceptive (pressure)

All these types of stims can be done in many ways, from the more socially acceptable ones such as biting your nails and jigging your leg to the less-so ones of flapping and verbal stims such as repeating a phrase or sound. Another way of stimming is through stim toys.

What are stim toys?

Stim toys have many different names; fidget toys, stress toys, chewelry (chewy jewellery), and sensory toys are just a few. But despite the name, they should not be viewed as toys. They are a helpful way of facilitating people's need for controllable sensory input.



WHY

...Do people stim?

- People stim because:
- It is coping a mechanism to certain emotions.
- In response to too much sensory input.
- It's a form of communication.
- The person stims to express their emotions.
- To regulate themselves when they need sensory input.

...Use stim toys?

There are two main reasons why people use stim toys.

Focus: stim toys help focus as it allows the person to have a tool to be stimulated, in turn, keeping them on track, whether it be an activity or listening to a leader. This is because the stim toy offers the person something to focus on when they need stimulation while still focusing on the task at hand and concentrating more.

Regulation: stim toys allow people to ground themselves when using them, so they are also good at helping anxiety. Stim toys can also support people who are having a sensory overload and need a controllable form of sensory input from the stim toys. People who are under-stimulated also benefit from stim toys because they allow for a channel to get stimulation over other forms of sensory seeking behaviour that can be seen as disruptive.

All stim toys work differently on different people as everyone's needs are specific to the individual, and so would the type of stim toy they use and why it works for them.

WHO



Implementation in the Group



Stim toys in the group

Stim toys can, and should, be implemented and encouraged within all sections of the group for both young people and adult volunteers because stim toys have many benefits irrespective of age. The most important thing to remember is that everyone is an individual and will prefer and respond differently to certain stim toys.

To achieve greater acceptance and understanding of why stimming is essential and not bad behaviour it needs to be discussed and the use of stim toys and stimming, in general, should be encouraged. By doing this, stimming, stim toys, and those who use them will be seen with greater acceptance resulting in the destigmatising of stimming. A great and straightforward way of doing this is through the creation of a sensory toolkit for each section.

Sensory tool kit

What is it?

Sensory toolkits are a collection of stim toys and sensory objects that young people can use through the meeting when needed and return at the end of the night. They can be any size, from a little box of stim toys in the hall to a full-on sensory tent that can be put up when on camp.

Where can you get stim toys?

Stim toys can be both bought and made. Stim toys and other sensory items such as stuffed animals/toys can be found in high street shops and online. Some parts of the toolkit can be made by leaders or the young people themselves. For example, a liquid tile is a sealed sandwich bag filled with cloured liquid glitter, and other small items like bracelets and squish toys made out of balloons and flour can be made for use in the toolkit and young people.

What can go into the toolkit?

Sensory toolkits can be made up of many different items big and small and at a range of costs, but most of the items can be found at a reasonably cheap price. On the next page is a starter list for sensory toolkits that might help you start and give you some inspiration on what to fill your sections sensory toolkit.

...Are neurodivergent people?

Neurodivergent people are a group of people with neurodiversities. Neurodiversity is about the varied ways that human brains work. Many different disabilities and mental health conditions come under neurodiversity. An easy way of viewing neurodiversity is that "everyone has a different flavour of brain", and an easy way of understanding what neurodiversity means is by splitting the word.

Neurodiversity: Neuro = Brain + Diversity = Different

Neurotypical: Neuro = Brain + Typical = Same

...Stims?

Everybody stims in some way, regardless of neurotype. It is often not as noticeable or impactful when neurotypical people stim compared to neurodiverse people, because the types of stimming done by neurotypicals are seen as more socially acceptable. But regardless stimming is very important to many people both neurodiverse and neurotypical.

...Uses stim toys?

Anyone can use stim toys and benefit from them. However, they are designed with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), autism, SPD (Sensory Processing Disorder), neurodivergent people and other additional needs in mind because it is a designated outlet to keep neurodiverse brains engaged through the controllable sensory input and the repetitive and predictable movements from the stim toy.

Sensory tool kit starter list

There are many different stim toys out there, and often have a few other names, types and looks than what is shown here. But common and useful stim toys to go into a sensory tool kit are:

Fidget cubes

A cube with a different fidget on each side, often having a joystick, switch, gears, rolling ball, spinning disk and five buttons – some cubes have two silent buttons.

Fidget spinners

A stim toy with ball bearings in the centre that spins around often with weighted edges.

Dimple

A set of pop-able 'bubbles', can come in various shapes, sizes and colours.

Stretch stings

A stretchy piece of material that can be used in many sensory-stimulating ways.

Tangles

A modular piece of plastic that moves and 'tangle' -hence the name, come in various lengths, colours, and textures.

Bubble timer

A container of two-coloured liquids that move in visually stimulating ways. They come in many types of colours and varieties.

Soft toys

Many different soft toys can be added, but all would have the same purpose as tactile sensory objects.

Squeeze bead ball

A soft and squeazy ball filled with squishy beads for both tactile and visual stimulation.

Weighted lap pad

Lap pads are designed to apply pressure which can be calming to many due to the deep pressure touch they provide.

More Information

Scout Information

More information regarding supporting people with additional needs can be found on The Scouts website:

<https://www.scouts.org.uk/volunteers/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/supporting-people-with-additional-needs/>

Advocate Information

In addition to information from charities and organisations, another vital line of information comes from neurodiverse people themselves through neurodiversity advocates. They have first-hand experiences and understanding of what being neurodiverse is like and shares them to widen the understanding and, in turn, acceptance of neurodiversity.

Below are some neurodiversity advocate accounts that do informative and easily digestible information and the respective platforms they are on.

@cosmo.aut – Instagram

@aut.punk – Instagram

@Paige Layle – YouTube

@myautisticsoul – Instagram & Facebook

@the.autisticats - Instagram and Twitter

@howtoADHD - YouTube Facebook and Twitter

Charity Information

Information about stimming and sensory processing can be found through several charity websites. The National Autistic Society has a short and informative guide about stimming on its website. It is written in the context of being an autistic person / supporting autistic people; however, it can be applied to many non-autistic people.

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/behaviour/stimming/all-audiences>





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Get In Touch

Have a question about this booklet and/or its subject matter?

Please contact us at inclusion@kentscouts.org.uk



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