

HOW TO BUILD AN ADULT SENSORY KIT

What goes in one, what to skip, and where to keep it

WHAT IT IS

A sensory kit is a small collection of items — usually five to eight — that engage different senses. Adults use them during focused work, between meetings, or any time they want a physical reset. University libraries, counselling centres, and disability-services offices increasingly circulate them the same way they circulate laptops or headphones.

WHAT GOES IN ONE

Build across four sensory channels. Pick one or two from each category.

TACTILE

- Resistive putty — medium-to-hard; thermochromic varieties shift colour with hand heat in 30–60 s, doubling as a visual cooldown timer
- Smooth stones or a metal worry coin
- Textured fidget rings or silicone fidget tools

AUDITORY

- Foam earplugs or loop-style noise-reducing earplugs
- A printed card with free white-noise app recommendations

VISUAL

- A liquid motion timer
- A small kaleidoscope

PROPRIOCEPTIVE (PRESSURE & RESISTANCE)

- A hand-exercise grip ring (10–20 lb)
- A thick rubber band looped around two fingers for resistance stretching

WHAT TO SKIP

These look good on a supply list and cause problems in practice.

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SCENTED ITEMS

Fragrance sensitivities are common in shared spaces. In a circulating kit, scent is a liability.

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GLITTER OR LOOSE FILL

Cleanup falls on staff. Glitter migrates to every surface it touches.

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ITEMS MARKETING TO CHILDREN

Adults who feel self-conscious about sensory needs won't reach for something that looks like a preschool supply.

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NOISE-MAKING ITEMS

Click cubes and clicky switches create the exact sensory disruption you're trying to solve for someone else.

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KINETIC SAND

Genuinely satisfying. Also genuinely impossible to contain.

TWO VERSIONS

PERSONAL DESK KIT (~\$20)

Zippered pencil pouch: one putty, one fidget ring or worry stone, one grip ring, foam earplugs, and a liquid motion timer. Total: \$15–22.

CIRCULATING-LIBRARY KIT (~\$35–50)

Same contents, plus a second tactile option, a "what's in this kit" card, and a hard-sided zippered case. Label each item. Include a cleaning note.

WHERE TO KEEP IT

The kit only works if it's reachable before someone is fully dysregulated.

- Desk kit: On the desk or top drawer — not the bottom file cabinet.

– **Library circulation:** Behind the service desk with other short-loan items.

– **Counselling centre:** In the waiting area, not behind intake.

If someone has to ask for it, most people won't.