

**Lifeworks**  
A nonprofit serving  
people with disabilities

**Maximize Potential and Have  
Fun in Multi-Sensory  
Environments**

May 2009  
Cindy Wagner

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**Lifeworks**

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**Five Valued Experiences**

- Sharing ordinary places
- Growing in relationships
- Making choices
- Contributing
- Being respected

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**Services**

- Career Development
- Social Enrichment
- Customized Support
- Multi-Sensory Environments
- Music Therapy

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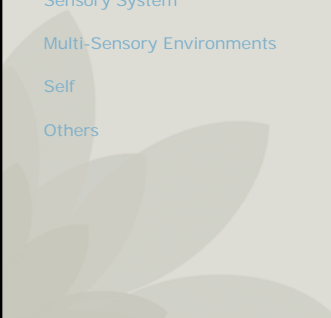
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**Sensory Essentials**

- Sensory System
- Multi-Sensory Environments
- Self
- Others



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**Sensory System**

- Autonomic Nervous System
  - Sympathetic
  - Parasympathetic
  - Reticular System
- If not perceived correctly, can impair use of higher functioning areas

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### Sensory Input

- Proprioceptive
- Vestibular
- Tactile
- Auditory
- Smell
- Taste
- Visual
- Vibro-acoustic



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### Difficulty Processing

- Defensiveness
- Over-focusing
- Masking
- Self-injurious behaviors

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### Observations

- Drooling
- Teeth grinding
- Yelling
- Pounding
- Pacing
- Squeezing
- Movement near eyes
- Muscle tensing
- Walking on toes
- Rocking
- Avoiding eye contact

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**Speed**

HIGH

JUST RIGHT

LOW

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**Comparative Approaches**

- Sensory Integration
- Snoezelen
- Multi-Sensory Environment

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**Multi-Sensory Environments**

- Dedicated Room
- Controlled Sensory Input
- Adaptive Response
- Therapeutic Effects

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**Multi-Sensory Environments**

- Calm and Alert
- Intense and Novel
- Compounded Effect
- Neuroplasticity
  - From Linda Messbauer, MA, OTR/L

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**MSE Equipment**

- Solar Projector
- Bubble Tube
- Light Spray
- Mirrors
- Mirror Ball



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**MSE Equipment**

- Vibro-acoustic Recliner
- Music



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**Sensory Essentials for Yourself**

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**Sensory Essentials for Others**

- Building Blocks
  - Help people fill their sensory needs
  - Help them communicate to their full potential
  - People have a better day and can work toward achieving their hopes and dreams

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**Movement**

<p><b>Avoiding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin slowly</li> <li>• Gradually add motion</li> <li>• Must feel secure</li> </ul>	<p><b>Seeking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rocking chair, glider</li> <li>• Therapy ball</li> <li>• Walking</li> <li>• Jumping</li> <li>• Drive bumper cars</li> <li>• Push grocery cart</li> <li>• Regulate</li> <li>• Reward with movement</li> </ul>
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**Tactile**

<p>Avoiding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seams in clothing</li> <li>• Soft clothing</li> <li>• Socks inside out</li> <li>• Labels</li> </ul>	<p>Seeking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fidgets</li> <li>• Temperature             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Showers</li> <li>- Neutral warmth - blanket</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Light touch             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Petting a dog</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Deep touch             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resistive clay</li> <li>- Heavy blankets</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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**Auditory**

<p>Avoiding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit noise</li> <li>• Limit your speech</li> <li>• Sound breaks</li> <li>• Bass</li> <li>• Environment</li> </ul>	<p>Seeking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music</li> <li>• Variations in noise level</li> <li>• Variations in rhythm</li> <li>• White noise</li> </ul>
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**Smell**

- Caution
  - Direct path to brain
- Calming
  - Lavender
  - Baking - vanilla
- Annoying
  - Perfumes
- Alerting
  - Spicy

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**Taste, Oral Motor**

- What you do
  - Blowing, sucking, swallowing
  - Crunching, chewing, licking
- How it feels
  - Resistance
  - Taste: sweet, sour, salty, spicy, bitter
  - Temperature: popsicle, hot chocolate
- What with?
  - Bubbles, water bottle with straw, candy, beef jerky, fruit, crackers, gum

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**Visual**

- Light
  - Natural
  - Fluorescent
    - Avoid with autism
- Color
  - Bright colors
  - Muted colors
- Visual Distraction
  - Visually cluttered room
  - Sparsely decorated room

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**Planning is Key**

- Know what the individual looks like when they need . . .
- Have activities ready and easily accessible
- Teach the individual to recognize their needs and request activities
- Learn what helps you rev yourself up and calm yourself down
- 'Feed your body' so then you can 'feed your soul'

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**Lifeworks**

Lifeworks Services, Inc.  
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**Program Locations**  
Bloomington  
Brooklyn Park  
Burnsville  
Eagan  
Hastings  
Mankato  
Minneapolis  
St. Paul

**Administrative Office**  
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Cindy Wagner, MA, OTR/L  
Occupational Therapist  
651-365-3762  
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**About Lifeworks**

Lifeworks collaborates with employers and government agencies to provide people with disabilities the programs and support they need to pursue fulfilling work in the community, rewarding social and educational experiences, and increased independence. To learn more or make a contribution, visit [www.lifeworks.org](http://www.lifeworks.org).

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