

Reinforcement Inventory

A reinforcement inventory can be used when a caregiver is struggling to come up with things that motivate an individual. This serves as a guide to match your child’s general interests to new possible motivators. As you go through this handout we encourage you to try exposing your child to novel items and experiences, as you may be surprised what motivates them. Another factor to consider is access. Where will your child have access to these items? For example, school may not allow certain items to be utilized, or you may not have access to pieces of equipment in the home. It is ok to have certain motivators for different environments. You will also notice that there are no food items or electronics listed in this inventory. While we understand that motivators can be limited for some of our children, we encourage you to stay away from food and electronic rewards. Children with Down syndrome typically struggle with weight due to their decreased metabolism, so rewarding with food can result in additional secondary medical problems that can then further impact behaviors. Electronics can result in more and more isolation and possibly even increase some challenging behaviors due to refusal to give up this motivator.

Sensory Seeking Motivators:

Some children like to seek out certain sensations that are calming or soothing to their bodies. Sometimes this can involve another object or sometimes it might be something that they do repetitively with their body and do not seem to have a clear purpose. We call these sensory seeking behaviors.

Auditory (Sound)

Behaviors you may observe: humming, verbalizations, tapping on objects, listening to music, putting ear to objects.						
Behaviors observed that may be auditory seeking:			<i>Who has access?</i> <i>(list any additional environments your child may go)</i>			
Liked	Disliked	Things to try:	Home	School		
		Toys that make noise				
		Drums				
		Triangles				
		Tambourine				
		Bells				
		Keyboard				
		Whistles				
		Radio				
		Push / Pull toys that make noise (See and Say)				
		Music boxes / Jack in the Box				
		Hair Dryers				
		Books on Tape				
		Music				

		Conversation with another person				
		Stethoscopes or whisper phones				
		Crinkling tape, tissue paper, or “scrunchy” items				
		Sing / play a song				

Oral Motor

Behaviors you may observe: licking, tasting, putting objects in mouth, chewing on things						
Behaviors observed that may be oral motor seeking:				<i>Who has access?</i> <i>(list any additional environments your child may go)</i>		
Liked	Disliked	Things to try:	Home	School		
		Oral motor chews in a variety of shapes and textures				
		Textiles to chew				
		Electric toothbrush				
		Frozen teethers or chews				
		Water with a lot of ice				
		Lemon or lime juice added to water				
		Blowing bubbles through a straw				
		Blowing into different bottles, bags, containers				

Smell

Behaviors you may observe: smelling him / herself or others, smelling objects or equipment.						
Behaviors observed that may be scent-seeking:				<i>Who has access?</i> <i>(list any additional environments your child may go)</i>		
Liked	Disliked	Things to try:	Home	School		
		Smell kit - small containers with strong smells inside:				
		Herbs and spices				
		Onion or garlic				
		Flowers or potpourri				
		Extracts (vanilla, almond, orange, coconut)				
		Coffee beans / grounds				
		Essential Oils (put a drop on a cotton ball or cloth scrap):				
		Lavender (calming)				

		Peppermint (alerting)				
		Citrus – Lemon, Lime, Grapefruit (alerting)				
		Chamomile (calming)				
		Rosemary (alerting)				
		Eucalyptus (alerting)				
		Scented markers or crayons				
		Scented playdough				
		Putting on or smelling lotion or perfume				
		Putting on nail polish				

Tactile (touch)

Behaviors you may observe: touching or rubbing objects, others or him/herself, or rubbing objects across their own skin, putting fingers in mouth, laying on textured surfaces						
Behaviors observed that may be tactile seeking:				<i>Who has access?</i> <small>(list any additional environments your child may go)</small>		
Liked	Disliked	Things to try:	Home	School		
		Putting on lotion				
		Playing with silly putty or playdough				
		Puppets				
		Playing with or picking items out of playdough, Theraputty				
		Finger painting with paint, soap, pudding				
		Playing with an assortment of brushes and combs				
		Puppets				
		Shaving cream play				
		Vibrating toys / massagers				
		Brushing hair				
		Chapstick				
		Different textured balls				
		Stretchy toys				
		Fan				
		Taking a shower		N/A		
		Spraying with a water bottle				
		Warmed rice sock				
		Cold packs				
		Sensory Bins filled with:				
		Sand				

		Water				
		Water beads				
		Flour				
		Baking Powder				
		Cotton balls				
		Felt / different types of fabric				
		Feathers				
		Slime				
		Beads				
		Rice				
		Noodles				

Vestibular (movement)

Behaviors you may observe: rocking, pacing, toe-walking, spinning, swinging, jumping, holds head to one side, head bangs, bouncing legs						
Behaviors observed that may be vestibular seeking:				<i>Who has access?</i> <i>(list any additional environments your child may go)</i>		
Liked	Disliked	Things to try:	Home	School		
		Bouncing or rolling on a therapy ball				
		Swing				
		Hammock				
		Rolling in a barrel				
		Rolling up and being pulled out of a blanket				
		Riding a bike or adaptive trike				
		Spinning in an office chair or stool				
		Slides				
		Doing wall push-ups				
		Rocking chair or horse				
		Exercising on an elliptical				
		Rowing or Pilates machines				
		Piggy back / shoulder / airplane rides (when age / weight appropriate)				
		Rolling down a hill				
		Jumping on mats / pillows				
		Monkey Bars				
		Dance				

Proprioceptive (body sense)

Behaviors you may observe: Crashing into things, wanting to be squeezed, squeezing others.						
Behaviors observed that may be proprioceptive:				<i>Who has access?</i> <i>(list any additional environments your child may go)</i>		
Liked	Disliked	Things to try:	Home	School		
		Squeezes or hugs				
		Roller machine				
		Rolling a therapy ball on body with light pressure				
		Wall Push-ups				
		Running up / down a ramp				
		Pushing a cart or carrying a weighted backpack				
		Pulling a wagon				
		Crawling under a beanbag chair				
		Weighted blanket / toy				
		Dressing up				
		Hiding under a blanket				
		Walk on a balance beam				
		Climbing wall				
		Walk on top of provider's feet				
		Climb in a box, tent, or under a table				

Visual

Behaviors you may observe: Fixates lights or moving objects, looks at hands or moves fingers in front of face, flips through pictures on phones						
Behaviors observed that may be visual seeking:				<i>Who has access?</i> <i>(list any additional environments your child may go)</i>		
Liked	Disliked	Things to try:	Home	School		
		Spinning tops				
		Light-up toys				
		Balls that light up when bounced				
		Wind-up or pull back toys				
		Sensory bottles with glitter or floating objects				
		Lava lamps				
		Kaleidoscopes				

		View Master				
		Snow Globes				
		Egg timer				
		Bubbles				
		Stopwatch				
		Streamers				
		Flashlights				

Other Motivators

If your child is not a sensory seeker they may still be motivated by any of the above items. Try them out and see how your child responds. They may also be motivated by other things as well.

Tangible

A tangible reinforcer is something a child is motivated by that is an object that they wish to obtain.			<i>Who has access?</i> <i>(list any additional environments your child may go)</i>			
Liked	Disliked	Things to Try:	Home	School		
		Stamps / stickers				
		Balloons				
		Toys				
		Blocks				
		Crown, cape, hat, mask, badge				
		Books				

Action / Activity

A child may be motivated by doing something.			<i>Who has access?</i> <i>(list any additional environments your child may go)</i>			
Liked	Disliked	Things to Try:	Home	School		
		Building with blocks or Legos				
		Building from a kit				
		Puzzles				
		Playing teacher / teacher helper				
		Cooking a meal				
		Coloring / drawing				
		Helper (water plants, feed pet, hold door, wipe tables, take out trash or recycling, open / close windows)				

		Go on a treasure hunt or geocaching				
		Play Simon Says				
		Extra time outside / in gym				
		Free Art time (paint with varied materials, glue, scrap paper etc.)				

Social

Social Reinforcers are activities that get a child to interact with another person.			<i>Who has access?</i> <i>(list any additional environments your child may go)</i>			
Liked	Disliked	Things to Try:	Home	School		
		Praising				
		Playing a game				
		Making a phone call				
		Going on a walk with a preferred person				
		Photographer				
		Be a tour guide				
		High-fives or knuckles				
		Hugging (If age appropriate for outside providers)				
		Back Scratch				
		Tickle (If age appropriate for outside providers)				
		Clapping				
		Peek-a Boo				