



How does your **Engine Run?**



The primary focus of the alert program is to help children to learn to monitor, maintain and change their level of alertness so that it is appropriate to the situation or task.

AROUSAL

- **Arousal** - a state of the nervous system, describing how alert one feels. To attend, concentrate and perform tasks in a manner suitable to the situational demands, one's nervous system must be in an optimal state of arousal for a particular task.
- **Self-regulation** - the ability to attain, maintain and change arousal state appropriately for the task or situation. When difficulties in self-regulation occur, the individual will have trouble changing the degree of alertness they feel, which in change will compromise optimal functioning.

AROUSAL STATES

- Arousal levels are described as "high", "low", or "just right" engine levels in the Alert Program.
 - High engine levels might manifest as hyperactivity, frustration, anxiety, anger or silliness for example. High engine levels are usually easy to identify.
 - Low engine levels might manifest as appearing bored, tired or lethargic, or even as if they are unaware of what is happening around them.
 - Just right engine levels are noticeable when the child seems calm, alert and is able to focus on a given task. Just right is always the aim, yet not always easy to find. For some people, just right can be a small area that is difficult to reach and easy to go over.
- Our engine levels often change throughout the day, and often depend on what we've been doing.
- Different people can have very different engine levels, and need different things to get them to keep them at a just right speed.
- It is important to recognise different engine levels to support optimal alertness for learning.

The sensory systems are:



Touch (*Tactile*) - Provides information about the environment and object qualities (e.g. pressure, texture, hard, soft, dull, hot, cold, pain). It has both protective and discriminative purposes.

Move (*Vestibular*) - Provides information about where our body is in space and whether or not we, or our surroundings, are moving. Tells about speed and direction of movement.

Move (*Proprioception*) - Provides information about where a body part is and how it is moving. Contributes to body awareness, motor planning and control.



Mouth (*Gustatory*) - Provides information about different tastes (sweet, sour, bitter, salty, spicy).



Look (*Visual*) - Provides information about objects and persons. Helps us define boundaries as we move through space and time.



Listen (*Auditory*) - Provides information about sounds in the environment (Loud, soft, high, low, near, far).



Smell (*Olfactory*) - Provides information about different types of smell (musty, acrid, putrid, flowery, pungent).



Put something in your mouth

- Eat hard candy (can be sugarless)
- Eat crunchy food: pretzels, popcorn, nuts, apples
- Eat chewy food: chewing gum, raisins, bagels, chunks of cheese
- Eat sour food: pickles, sour candy
- Drink from a straw: use an "exercise bottle" to drink liquids such as milkshakes, partially thawed frozen drinks, or other drinks
- Try a combination: chips dipped in salsa (crunchy and spicy)
- Use green rubber tubing
- Take slow deep breaths



Move (try movement before needing to concentrate e.g. homework)

- Do isometrics (push arms on wall or push hands together)
- Walk quickly (in school or take the dog for a walk)
- Run up and down steps
- Do an errand for a teacher
- Shake head quickly
- Roll neck slowly in a circular motion
- Jumping
- Play sports
- Aerobics
- Dance
- Activities with a therapy ball
- Climbing



ACTIVITIES TO CHANGE

ENGINE SPEED



Look

- Put bright lights in a room if the child is in low speed
- Dim the lights if the child is in high speed
- Clear off the table the child is working on
- Watch fish in an aquarium
- Read a book



Touch

- Holding fidget toys: Koosh ball, paper clips, rubber bands, straws, clay etc.
- Rub gently or vigorously over skin or clothing
- Deep pressure linear lotion massage
- Take a cool shower or warm bath
- Wash your face with a cool or warm wash cloth
- Pet or play with animal/soft toys
- Squishes with a pillow/bean bag or wrapping in a blanket (Always make sure the blanket/pillows/bean bags never touch neck or cover head for safety reasons).



Listen

- Listen to classical music
- Listen to hard rock music
- Slow, even beats are calming
- Loud, fast uneven beats are alerting
- Use headphones if the music bothers someone else.
- Avoid loud, noisy places if you are in high speed or if it bothers you when you are trying to concentrate.



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