

Self-Stimulating Behaviors

What is self-stimulating behavior?

Self-stimulating behavior or “stimming” is a behavior that presents as a repetitive sound, movement, or behavior. According to the DSM-5, stimming is a part of the diagnostic criteria for autism spectrum disorder (ASD). However, stimming is something that any person can display, such as twirling hair, biting a pen, or cracking your knuckles.

Why does my child stim?

1. Over-stimulation
2. Under-stimulation
3. Pain reduction
4. Management of emotions
5. Self-regulation

What to do about self-stimulating behaviors

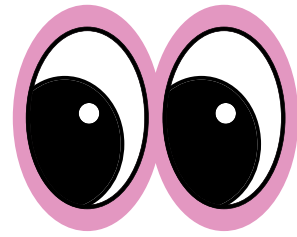
It is important to understand that self-stimulating behaviors are a natural part of how a person self-regulates and cannot be completely stopped. However, if stimming is interfering with functional tasks, using the strategy of **incompatible behaviors** can and replace stimming behaviors with behaviors that are safer and more appropriate. An incompatible behavior is a behavior that won't allow your child to stim because it cannot occur at the same time as the stimming. Listed below is a chart including different types of stimming behaviors, and how you could address and reduce them to improve the functional performance of your child.

Some general points include: providing a calming environment for your child, sticking to a routine for daily tasks, encouraging acceptable behavior, and avoid punishing the behavior.

Important note: Some self-stimming behaviors can be self-injurious such as banging head, biting or scratching self

Stimming Type	Stimming Behavior	How to Address Behavior
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staring/gazing at objects • Flapping hands • Squinting from the corners of the eyes • Lining up objects • Flipping through book without looking • Turning lights on and off • Moving fingers in front of eyes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a light up toy to facilitate eye tracking • Dim lighting/natural light
Auditory/Vocal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singing

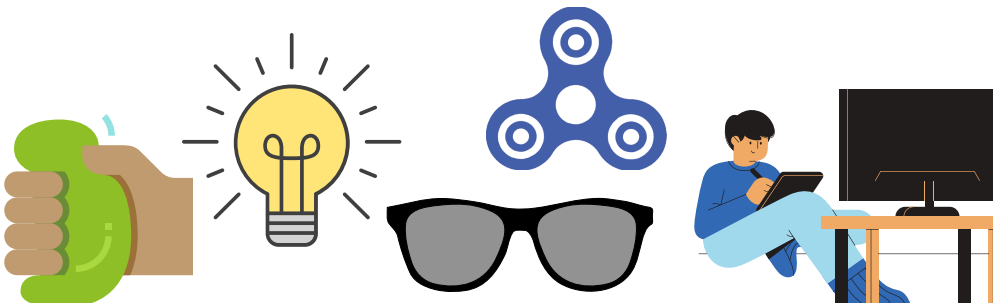
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-pitched screeching • Covering ears • Snapping fingers • Repetitive speech • Listening to the same sound repeatedly • Flapping hands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to them/ask questions • Listen to songs or watch a show • Bring headphones or earplugs if they are sensitive to sound • Have a quiet area for child to go to if he/she is overwhelmed by crowded place
Tactile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scratching • Rubbing skin • Moving hands • Tapping or rubbing on objects • Finger tapping • Grinding teeth • Biting fingernails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Squeeze a stress ball • Playing with playdoh • Put hands in pockets • Play with fidget spinner • Clasp hands together • Participate in fine motor activities • Vibrating toothbrush • Vibrating sensory cushion
Olfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sniffing/smelling people or objects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use scented products such as oils or lotions for child to smell • DIY smell jars • Teach child how to greet others appropriately
Taste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mouthing objects • Licking people or objects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chewing gum • Talking to child • Eating a snack
Vestibular/ Proprioception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rocking back and forth or side to side • Pacing • Jumping • Spinning • Leaning on others • Flapping hands • Tip toe walking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn on music and dance with child; ring around the rosy • Sit in chair with wheels and spin child • Go on swing • Jump on Trampoline • Heavy work activities: pushing/pulling heavy objects • Running • Bicycles • Sitting down • Laying on floor and engaging in fine motor activity such as coloring/drawing • Wall push-ups • Giving your child big bear hugs



Visual Stimming Behaviors

<u>Stimming Behavior</u>	<u>How to Address Behavior</u>
Staring/Gazing at Objects	Visual Tracking using Light Up Toy/Object
Flapping Hands	Hold Hands Firmly (Apply Massage) Provide Squeeze Ball to Hand Heavy Work out Activities Reduce clutter
Squinting from Corner of Eyes	Kaleidoscopes Colorful Toy/Object Watch a Video
Lining Up Objects	Redirect with Play Skills
Flipping Through Book Without Looking	Fidget Spinners Playing I-Spy using Book Interactive Books (i.e. Poke-a-Dot Book)
Turning lights on and off	Provide Light up Toys Mood Lights/Dim Lights Wear Sunglasses
Moving Fingers in Front of Eyes	Tactile Play Heavy Work Activities

***Please be mindful that there are self-stimming behaviors that are not injurious to the child. Stimming behaviors are normal and should only be redirected when necessary or injurious to self.

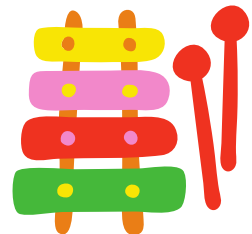




Auditory/Vocal Stimming

<u>Stimming Behavior</u>	<u>How to Address Behavior</u>
Humming	Listening to Music Watching Movies Singing Use Headphones
High Pitched Screeching	Talking Softly Have Conversation
Covering Ears	Using Headphones/Earplugs
Snapping Fingers	Use iPad/I-Spy Book Poke-a-Dot Book Bubble Wrap
Repetitive Speech	Singing
Listening to Same Sound Repeatedly	Playing Musical Toys
Flapping Hands (Oversensitivity to Sound in Noisy Environment)	Provide Fidget Toy or Squeeze Ball in Hand

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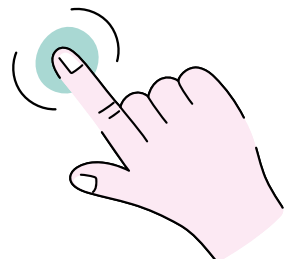
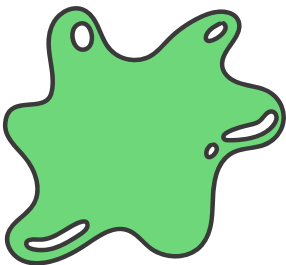


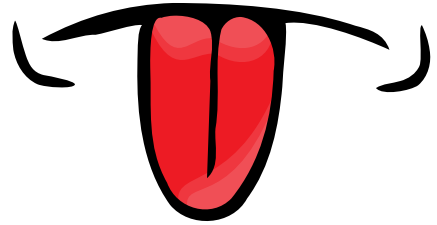


Tactile Stimming

Stimming Behavior	How to Address Behavior
Scratching	Bumpy Toys Deep Pressure Massage or Vibrating Massage Fidget Toys Rubbing Textured Items Against Skin
Rubbing Skin	Providing Various Textured Objects/Surfaces (i.e. Playdoh, Slime) Applying Lotion
Tapping or Rubbing on Objects	Weighted Blankets Applying lotion Playdoh/Slime Heavy Work Activities
Grinding Teeth	Vibrating Toothbrush Chewing Gum

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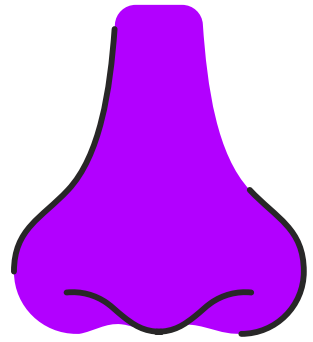


Oral Motor Stimming

Stimming Behavior	How to Address Behavior
Mouth Objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talking to Child• Eat a Snack• Spicy Foods• Sour Candy• Flavored Chips/Drinks
Licking People or Objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chewing Gum• Hard Candy

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Olfactory Stimming

Stimming Behavior	How to address behavior
Sniffing or smelling other people/objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use scented products such as oils or lotions for child to smell• DIY smell jars• Teach child how to greet others appropriately

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Vestibular/Proprioception Stimming

Stimming Behavior	How to Address Behavior
Rocking Back and Forth or Side to Side	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn on Music and Dance; Ring Around the Rosy • Weighted Blankets/Vests
Pacing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Running • Swing • Weighted Blankets/Vest
Jumping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swing • Bicycle Ride • Jump on Trampoline
Spinning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swing • Balance Boards • Sitting Down • Sit in Chair with Wheels and Spin Child
Leaning on Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give Your Child a Bear Hug • Heavy Work Activities: (i.e. pushing/pulling heavy objects) • Laying on Floor and Engaging in Fine Motor Activity such as Coloring/Drawing • Wall Push-Ups • Vibrating Cushion
Flapping Hands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wall Push-Ups • Laying on Floor and Engaging in Fine Motor Activity such as Coloring/Drawing
Tip Toe Walking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavier Sneakers/Shoes • Running/Jumping • Bike Riding

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