Engaging the Under-Responder

Summertime is a time for fun and a change in pace. For many individuals, this can be an opportunity to play, rest, and relax. For others, this can be stressful, overwhelming, and disorganizing. There are many effective strategies to reduce stress, maintain skills, and to improve sensory processing.

For those who are under-responsive to sensory input, decreased structure and demands may not be ideal for improving sensory processing. Engaging individuals in sensory-rich summertime activities helps activity and arousal levels. Remember that individuals who are under-responsive may appear apathetic or lethargic, but this is simply a response of their nervous system to sensory input. Don't assume a lack of motivation.

Strategies for the Under-Responder

- Incorporate daily activities for intense sensory input, under consultation of an OT
- Explore the outdoors: play in sandboxes and water and do other activities related to summer, such as swimming, riding a bike, jumping a rope, climbing, or swinging
- Be playful. Participate with individuals in play to improve socialization and motivation
- Include stimulating tactile input in play, such as drawing on the sidewalk with chalk or finger-painting
- Build in special interests into sensory experiences, such as building a Mario Castle in the sandbox or swimming with a favorite character/toy
- Open blinds and windows, when the weather is nice
- Monitor for signs of injuries as individuals. Individuals may not self-report or be aware
- Follow routines for increasing arousal in the morning and winding down in the evening
- Build awareness and self-management in teaching individuals about their own arousal, through use of visuals

For more strategies and ideas, check out IRCA sensory articles online or visit us at http://www.pinterest.com/IRCAIU/.