



CHAPTER 3 SECTION C

LEVEL I: SENSE-ABILITY TREATMENT FOR INDIVIDUALS

The purpose of the *Sense-ability Individual Treatment* is to provide sensory stimulation and success oriented experiences to patients who are too ill to attend a group session. The patients may be manic, isolative, catatonic, disorganized, resistant to treatment, and demonstrate poor behavioral control. Treatment is primarily conducted in inpatient psychiatry units or with substance abuse programs. Sensory activities are used to promote self-regulation, mental stability, and socialization.

The treatment is based on an adaptation of the *Sense-ability Group Stages*. The activities are shorter in duration and simplified, particularly in the *Learning Stage*, which typically requires advanced thinking strategies.

The following list identifies goals for patients participating in *Level I: Sense-ability Individual Treatment*. The patient will:

1. begin to build a therapeutic relationship and establish trust with the occupational therapist.
2. improve sensory awareness of self, others, and the environment.
3. improve self-regulation and behavioral control.
4. prepare for successful group participation.

Patients benefiting from this treatment approach include those with memory impairment, disorganization, and poor reality orientation. Like the *Sense-ability Group*, activities are geared towards patients with an ACLS score of 3.2 to 4.8.

Typically, occupational therapists or trained occupational therapy students provide *Level I: Sense-ability Individual Treatment* in the patient's room. Sessions vary in length, depending on the capability and endurance of the patient, usually about 15 to 20 minutes. Treatment is provided on an as needed basis. Usually, patients only need one or two individual sessions before transitioning to treatment groups.

Activities are chosen according to the patient's goals and interests. The treatment session does not need to include every Stage nor does it need to be done in the order of the *Sense-ability Group*. The Stages and planned activities provide structure to the therapy session, but flexibility is essential since

many factors can interfere with the plan, such as the patient's frame of mind and medical status. Each Stage is planned to last a few minutes, with more time spent on the activities related to the patient's goals. Examples of activities that have been used with success in treatment sessions follow:

- **Stage 1, the Attending Stage:** Choose an item with sensory interest to capture the patient's attention.

Examples: Pieces of candy, Jacob's Ladder toy, hand cream, or an unusual Koosh ball.

- **Stage 2, the Moving and Breathing Stage:** Choose several movement activities for stretching, gentle exercise and body awareness. Perform the movements along with the patient to demonstrate how important the exercises are for treatment. It is usually not practical to provide music in the patient's room, but if it can be arranged, patients enjoy it.

Examples: Overhead arm stretch, neck rolls, foot flexes and deep breathing.

- **Stage 3, the Conversing Stage:** Give the patient an opportunity to comment on the movement exercises, general health issues or concerns.

Examples: Ask the patient if it feels good to move, if the exercises help with relaxation, and how such movement activities could be incorporated into everyday routines.

- **Stage 4, the Sensing Stage:** Choose an activity that will give the patient strong sensory input.

Examples: Exercise band rowing, or beanbag tapping.

- **Stage 5, the Acting/Interacting Stage:** Choose a target game in line with the patient's capabilities and interests.

Examples: Balloon tapping, basketball, ring toss, or a Velcro target game.

- **Stage 6, the Learning Stage:** Choose an activity that is informal and centered on the patient's issues. Adapt parts of the skill building games.

Examples: Explore healthy leisure ideas using the activity cards or use the questions from the Getting to Know You game. Promote self-expression with the cards from the Emotion Games. Plan for discharge using the Goal Setting Game.

An example of how to use the Stages and activities in individual treatment follows to assist the therapist in planning a session.

A patient is referred to occupational therapy who has been very reclusive and lost interest in leisure activities. Goals for this patient include improving socialization and becoming involved in leisure activities. A Yoyo for the *Attending Stage* is selected as the therapist learned that the patient used to be very adept with it. During the *Moving and Breathing Stage*, exercises are emphasized because the patient has been bed ridden. While sitting next to the patient, the therapist begins with rocking back and forth and side to side and progresses to arm stretches, shoulder shrugs, neck rolls, deep breathing, and foot flexes. Exercise band rowing is used as the *Sensing Stage* activity because it is engaging and easy to compare to workouts with a rowing machine. For the *Conversing Stage*, the therapist engages the patient in a discussion about family, friends, and healthy interests enjoyed in the past. Because of the patient's interest in sports, basketball is chosen for the target game of the *Acting/Interacting Stage*. Cards from the *Sports Matching Game* are used during the *Learning Stage* activity to prompt discussion about different sports that the patient might be interested participating in after discharged. The patient plans to rejoin the YMCA and to call his brother to play golf.

The idea of using the Stages from the *Sense-ability Group* came from the author's experiences while working on a psychiatric unit where most treatment was conducted in groups. She observed that many patients who were seriously ill could not tolerate a group setting. Even providing individual treatment for these patients was challenging. The author decided to try using the Stages from the *Sense-ability Group* on an individual basis and found that the patients liked this non-threatening format. They readily participated in the activities and this led to the beginning of a positive therapeutic relationship. She has since used this format with success.