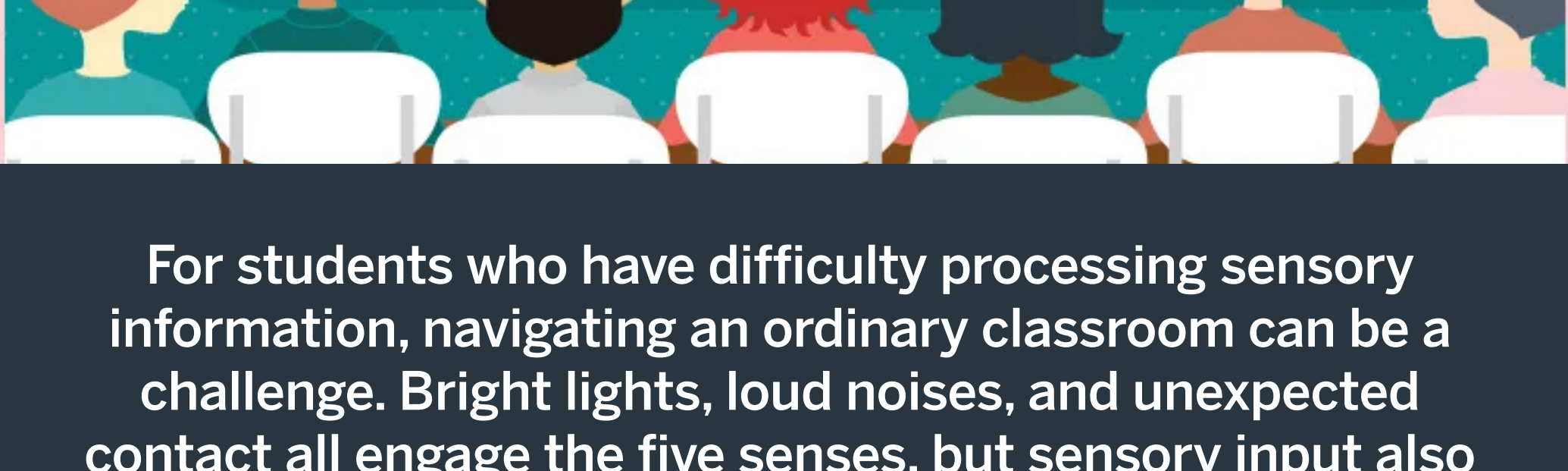


HOW TO CREATE A SENSORY-FRIENDLY CLASSROOM



For students who have difficulty processing sensory information, navigating an ordinary classroom can be a challenge. Bright lights, loud noises, and unexpected contact all engage the five senses, but sensory input also includes interoception, an awareness of hunger, pain, and other internal needs. With a few creative adjustments, classrooms can be more inclusive learning environments for all students.

Use alternative seating such as bouncy balls or bean bag chairs. Many children have trouble learning while they are sitting still, and alternative seating options give them the chance to bounce and fidget as needed while absorbing the lesson.

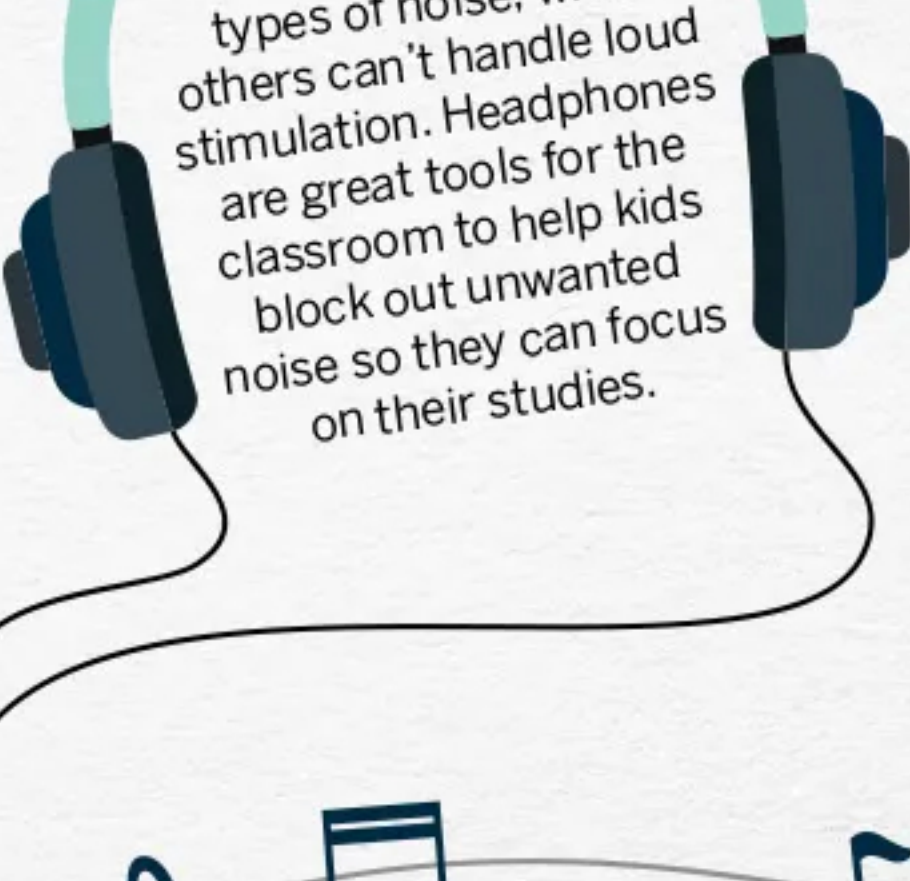


While it can be fun to use colorful lamps throughout the classroom, artificial lighting is often overstimulating for kids. Lots of bright, natural light helps kids focus more, so try to keep your classroom windows open whenever possible.

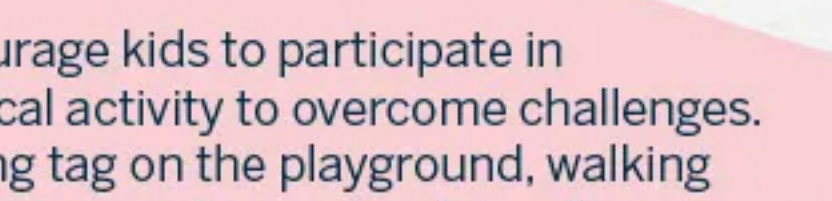
Set up an art station that can be easily adapted to fit various sensory needs. Some kids hate messy projects involving paint or glue, while others color with too much force and need to use markers instead of crayons.



Some kids thrive with certain types of noise, while others can't handle loud stimulation. Headphones are great tools for the classroom to help kids block out unwanted noise so they can focus on their studies.



Use music to encourage learning. Make up songs for everyday classroom activities and teach kids to clap along while singing.

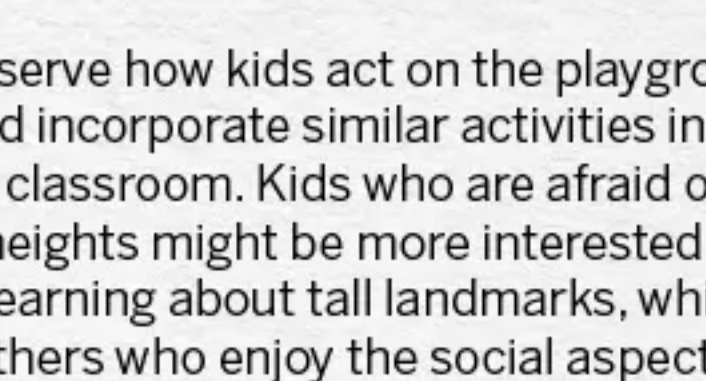


Encourage kids to participate in physical activity to overcome challenges. Playing tag on the playground, walking across narrow beams, and crawling through tunnels are all great ways to enhance gross motor skills.



Understand that kids learn differently and some grasp new skills earlier than others. Repetition and consistent encouragement are the best tools for helping kids learn new tasks.

Observe how kids act on the playground and incorporate similar activities in the classroom. Kids who are afraid of heights might be more interested in learning about tall landmarks, while others who enjoy the social aspect of recess may learn faster through group activities.



Kids who consistently spill or knock over food items in the cafeteria may need help developing their fine motor skills. Practicing tasks that require a pincher grasp or take a lot of hand-eye coordination may be helpful.

Teach kids how to react appropriately to accidental touches from other students.



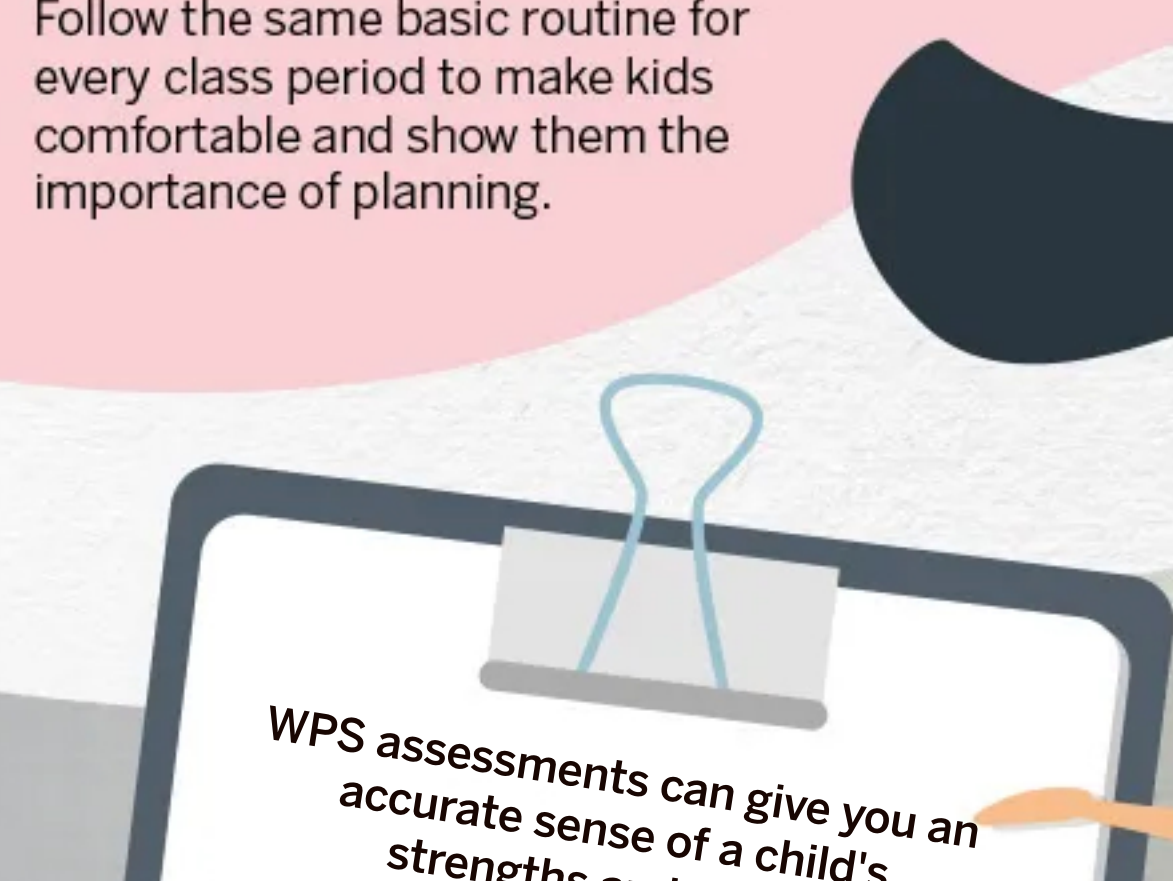
Use intervention strategies to help kids cope with sensory triggers. Provide earplugs kids can use to block out loud noises or show them how to knead a stress ball when they are anxious. Keep in mind that some kids are sensitive to smells and textures.

Create lesson plans using all five senses to make learning fun for kids. At the same time, understand that not every kid will be able to participate in all of the planned activities because of sensory preferences. Some classrooms include a climbing wall, sensory toys and materials, and handwriting accessories.



Follow the same basic routine for every class period to make kids comfortable and show them the importance of planning.

Understand that kids who need sensory stimulation will seek it out to calm themselves and are not trying to act up.



Teach life skills in class to help kids adapt.

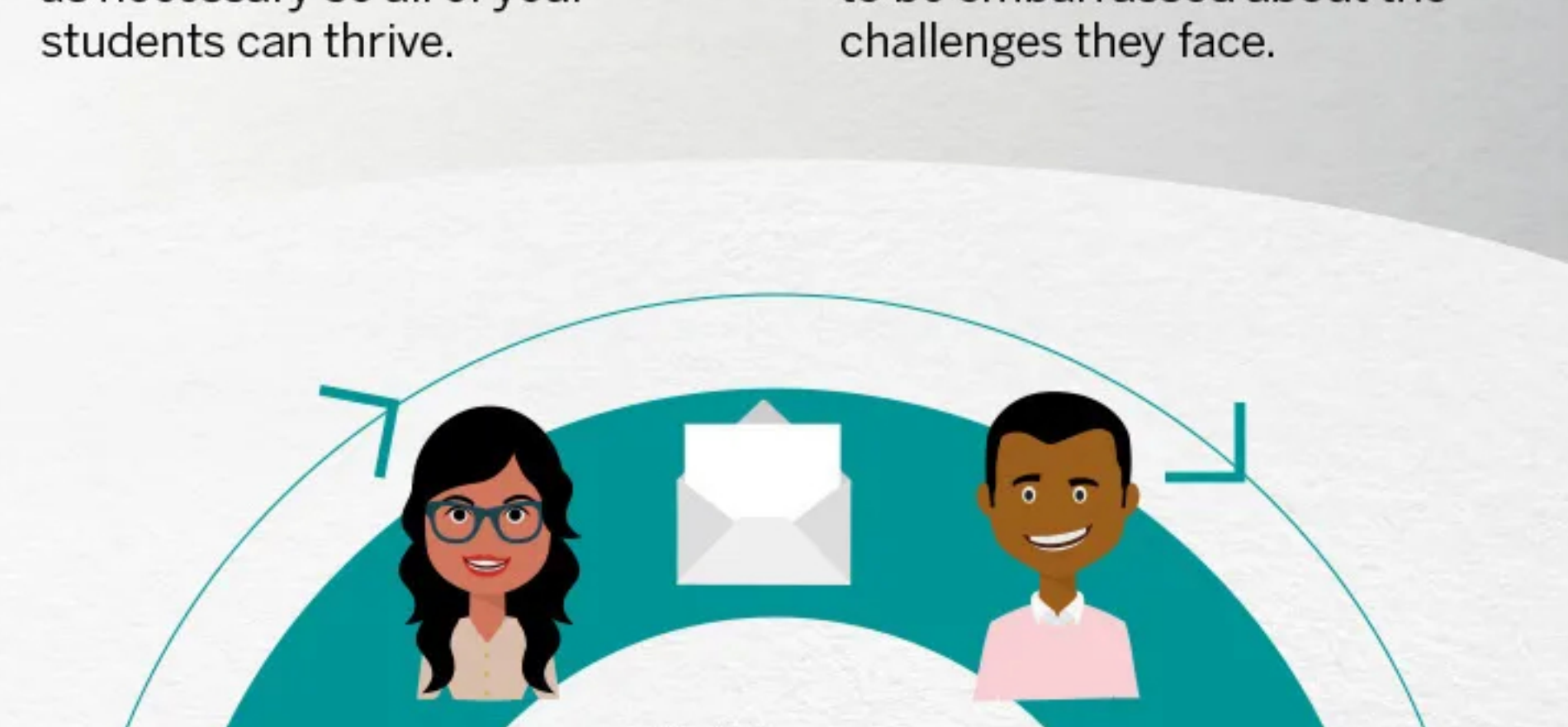
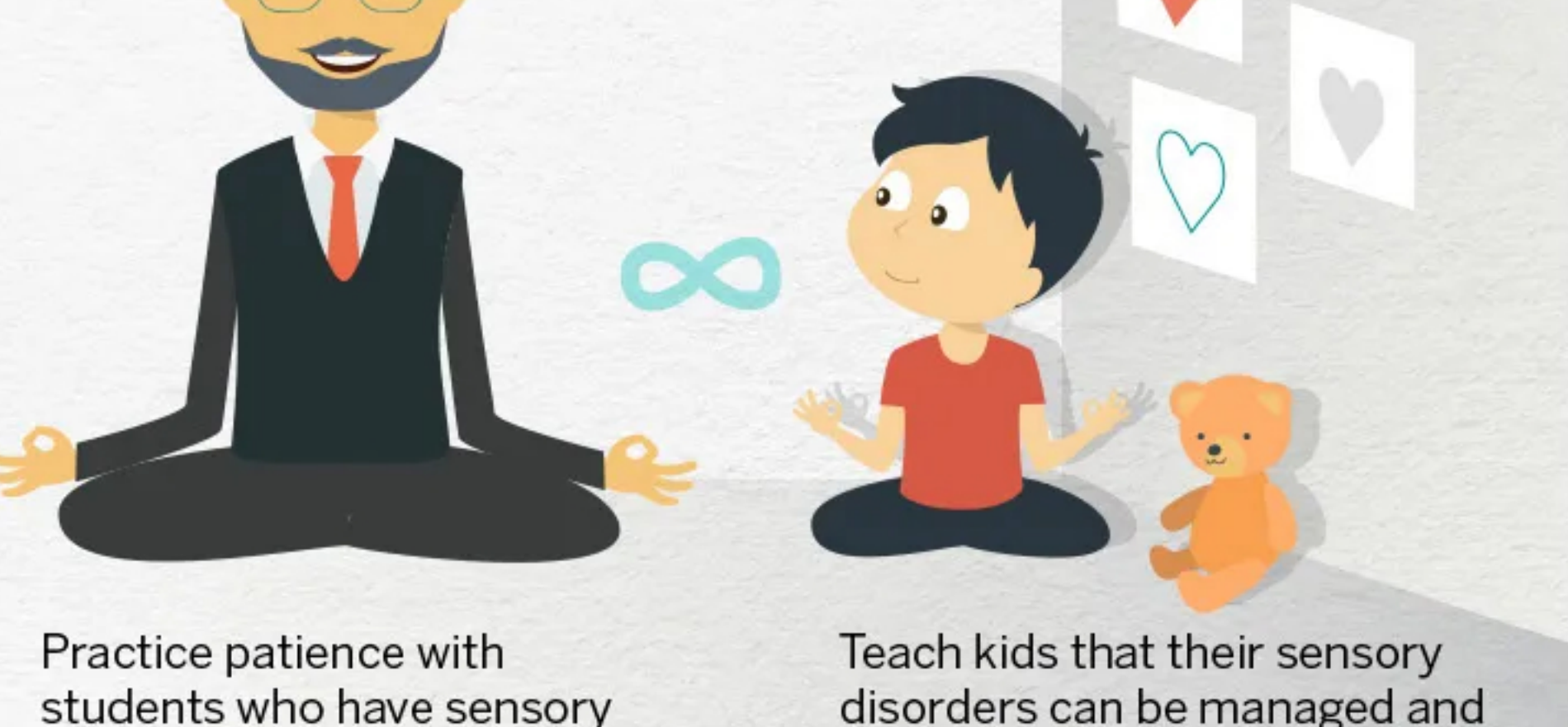
Provide plenty of intervention tools to help kids feel safe and calm in the classroom.



Use balance exercises to stimulate the vestibular system in kids and encourage them to focus.

Practice patience with students who have sensory disorders. Adapt your teaching strategy and classroom setup as necessary so all of your students can thrive.

Teach kids that their sensory disorders can be managed and overcome with intervention strategies. They shouldn't have to be embarrassed about the challenges they face.



Create "sensory safe" spaces beyond the classroom in these areas of school:

