

## **Integrating Sensory Connection PROGRAM Approaches into WRAP**

WRAP is an evidenced based plan authored by Mary Ellen Copeland (2012) which guides the development of an individualized plan of action to help achieve and maintain wellness and recovery (Cook et al, 2009; Cook et al, 2010; Copeland, 2015). It is widely used in mental health treatment and is actually mandated in some states including New Jersey.

According to Gardner et al (2012) WRAP and sensory based interventions are complementary in nature and can be combined successfully to create a tool that is empowering for people with mental health issues. They describe a program specifically designed to blend sensory-based treatment with WRAP; they used a sensory cart and sensory exploration to help clients identify preferences and helpful sensory tools. Other authors have advocated for using sensory interventions in a recovery toolbox (Brown, 2001; Champagne, 2005; LeBel, Champagne, Stromberg & Coyle, 2010).

The Sensory Connection Program and especially the *Sensory Connection Program Curriculum for Self-Regulation* are uniquely designed to offer additional tools, skill building activities, worksheets and games that can augment and even enhance the WRAP treatment approach.

Key elements in the WRAP “Wellness Toolbox” (Copeland, 2015& 2001) are followed below by activities and resources in the *Sensory Connection Program* (SCP) that could be easily and effectively integrated:

### **Daily Maintenance Plan**

Skill Building Activities in the SCP include games and handouts that can be used to help develop a health maintenance plan that includes plans for exercise, relaxation, leisure, and sleep hygiene ((Moore, 2015 & 2005).

### **Identifying Triggers and Warning Signs/Action Plan**

The SCP Curriculum designed to help people recognize states of arousal: emotional signs, physical signs & behavioral signs, activities teach strategies for calming alerting, activities teach how to “tune into” emotions and where they are felt in the body. The SCP works towards the development of a thoughtful *Crisis Intervention Plan* that includes the identification of signs and triggers. Identification of sensory triggers is a particular emphasis in the SCP and this is addressed through activities such as the *What Bothers You Game*, *Sensory Sensitivities Discovery Sheet* and *Working Around Bothersome Sensory Experiences* (Moore, 2015).

### **When Things Are Breaking Down/Action Plan**

A major focus of this element of the “Wellness Toolbox” is identifying supports and knowing who to reach to when things become difficult. Many SCP activities based on the Social Engagement Theories of Stephen Porges (2011) help facilitate communication and engagement with others to help mitigate distress; an example of an engagement activity is the *Who Would You Go To? What Can They Do?* game (Moore, 2015).

## **Crisis Planning**

Both *the SCP Self-Regulation Workbook* (Moore, 2008) and the *SCP Curriculum for Self-Regulation* (Moore, 2015) include the development of a Crisis Intervention and Safety Plan which can be used by hospital staff and also shared with family and care providers. Many strong sensory input strategies are suggested to help with self-regulation of difficult emotions including grounding activities, deep breathing, and non-tool based sensory strategies. Worksheets include *Circuit Breaker Strategies for Crisis Intervention* and the *Core Strategies for Crisis Intervention Log*. The *Strategies for Self-Regulation Game* is a group activity that brainstorms possible sensory coping strategies for difficult emotional situations.

## **Post Crisis Planning**

One of the goals of the SCP is to create a notebook or workbook that tracks information regarding crisis planning and helpful coping strategies that can be shared with family and care-providers post discharge. One particularly helpful activity is to plan for “Safe” or “Comfort” space in the home environment that can be used as an area to relax and re-group and to deal pro-actively with difficult emotions and stress (Moore, 2015 & 2008).

Using WRAP together with the *Sensory Connection Program* would help people to develop a comprehensive and multifaceted wellness and recovery plan.