

TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET

INTEROCEPTION

KEY FACTS FOR TEACHERS ABOUT INTEROCEPTION

Interoception includes all the signals from your internal organs, including your cardiovascular system, your lungs, your gut, your bladder and your kidneys. It's colloquially known as the eighth sense, with the other seven being sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, proprioception and vestibular (Lynch and Simpson, 2004). Interoception skills are needed for functions such as knowing when to go to the toilet, being aware that you are becoming angry or upset and being able to manage your emotions proactively. Much of the processing of these signals takes place below conscious awareness: you won't be aware of the automatic feedback between brain and body that helps to keep your blood pressure level. But many of these sensations – such as tension in your muscles, the clenching of your stomach, or the beating of your heart – should be available to the conscious mind, at least some of the time. And the ways you read and interpret those feelings will have important consequences for your wellbeing. Children and young people will struggle with their own emotions and social interactions if they have not developed interoception skills. Even just being around others may be difficult for them to manage.

Antonio Damasio (1999), laid the scientific foundation of interoceptive processes as the centre of self-awareness. Interoception has been linked to skills associated with emotion processing, anxiety, stress-associated diseases, maladaptive eating behaviour, eating disorders, and obesity issues.

INTEROCEPTION AND BEHAVIOUR AND LEARNING

Including interoception in the class doesn't require additional resourcing. It is used as part of quality differentiated teaching practice and can be considered part of the Australian Curriculum as reflected in the General Capabilities eg self-awareness. Teaching interoception using the suggested activities helps students connect to and learn to understand their own bodies and emotions. This develops the prerequisite skills for self-management and self-regulation.

2-3 SHORT SESSIONS A DAY INVOLVING ONE OR TWO ACTIVITIES

Sessions are more beneficial after breaks, for example first thing in the morning, after recess and after lunch. Most educators find that teaching an activity or two before rollcall, and after recess and lunch is the most effective and simplest way to embed interoception in the school day.

Each activity takes 1-5 minutes to implement, and teachers simply read the dot points whilst modeling the activity as students follow along.

**Activities
are typically
completed
twice.**

TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET

INTEROCEPTION

EXAMPLE OF AN INTEROCEPTIVE ACTIVITY:

An interoception activity focuses on a particular part of the body for 30–60 seconds. Students observe and label the movement and part of the body involved (for example, toes stretch and curl up or curl under). They are then encouraged to identify a change in their body state (for example, hot–cold, soft–hard, stretch–relax) and where they felt that change (arch or ball of foot, on top). The change in body state is always repeated a second time, and the whole class is asked to focus on noticing what they feel in a very specific part of their body. After the first time children and young people are asked where they felt the difference or what they felt. Then they are guided where or what to feel and asked to focus on that for the second time the activity is done.

REFERENCES

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. (2019).

www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/general-capabilities/

Damasio, A. (1999). *The feeling of what happens: Body, emotion and the making of consciousness*, Harcourt.

Lynch, S. A. & Simpson, C. G. (2004). Sensory processing: Meeting individual needs using the seven senses. *Young Exceptional Children*, 7(4), 2–9.

Mahler, K. (2015). *Interoception: The eighth sensory system*. Shawnee, KS: AAPC.

Tsakiris, M. De Preester, H. (Eds.). (2018). *The interoceptive mind*, Oxford University Press.

Introduction to interoception:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=To39nUkk2IM&list=PLXTC2Uqaw5-0lh46oXp0BWIHQOXDdLlvU