

Play Beyond Limits

Designing Sensory Experiences for Complex Needs



For people with severe intellectual disabilities and complex behavioural support needs, everyday sensory experiences can be overwhelming. While traditional sensory rooms offer calming environments through soft lighting, music, and gentle stimulation, these solutions do not meet the needs of everyone.

Many individuals within this target group benefit most from active sensory input. Movement, resistance, deep pressure, climbing, balancing, pushing, and pulling help them regulate, improve body awareness, and support emotional well-being. These experiences can provide comfort, stability, and a greater sense of control.

We invite you to bring movement, play, and sensory stimulation together to create meaningful and supportive experiences for this specific target group. This challenge requires empathy, creativity, and a deep understanding of how design can improve quality of life for people with complex sensory, intellectual and behavioural needs.

"How might we create an active play experience that supports sensory processing, regulation, and body awareness for people with complex support needs?"



Criteria

- Focus on vestibular and/or proprioceptive stimulation that **supports sensory processing and regulation**.
- Use materials that are **safe, hygienic, durable**, and suitable for **intensive cleaning**.
- Design for **intensive and unpredictable** use.
- The design must **fit into a small gym space**, where floor, ceiling and walls may be incorporated into the experience.
- The experience should be **intuitive, accessible, and safe** for both users and support staff.
- Consider **safety, spatial organization**, and **clearly defined areas** for different types of sensory activities.