

Making a 'Body Check Chart'

Difficulty with interoception often underlies many sensory processing challenges occupational therapists encounter. Interoceptive awareness is defined as our ability to notice internal sensations and give meaning to those sensations.

A body check chart (BCC) can help improve interoceptive awareness by calling attention to internal sensations in a structured, visual format. (See "Interoception: The Eighth Sensory System" Parts 1 and 2 by Kelly Mahler, MS, OTR/L, in the May and June 2016 issue of *ADVANCE*).

Items Needed

- Construction or craft paper (variety of colors)
- File Folder
- Blank body outline (printed from the internet or hand-drawn) — attached to the inside of the file folder
- Marker or pen
- Scissors
- Glue
- Velcro
- Laminator (optional)

Making the Chart

Whenever possible, create the BCC with the client's help and input. Prior to starting, decide on the number of body areas to first include on the BCC.

Begin with a small number and expand as the client grows proficient with the BCC. Even



Body Part	Descriptor
Brain/Head	Dizzy, throbbing, pain, heavy, fast, spinning, blank
Eyes	Heavy, blurry, watery, stinging, itchy, squinty, teary
Ears	Bothered, sore, focused
Mouth	Dry, sore, OK, tickly, itchy
Voice	Loud, soft, friendly, grumbly
Skin	Sweaty, itchy, goose bumps, bothered, tight, dry, content, warm, cold
Lungs/Chest	Fast, slow, relaxed, tight, short, panting
Heart	Fast, slow, warm, swelling, full, pounding
Stomach	Content, hungry, full, fluttery, tingly, nauseous, heavy, gurgling, growling, cramping
Muscles	Tense, tight, relaxed, normal, loose, heavy, sore, wiggly, antsy, bursting, hot, burning
Hands & Fingers	Still, squeezing, moving, twisting, clenched, sweating, flapping, fidgeting
Feet & Toes	Curling, wiggling, fidgeting, shaking, pacing, clenching, tapping, loose

starting with one body part is OK.

1. On construction paper, draw an outline of each body area to be included (e.g. hands, muscles, heart). Use a different color of paper for each body area icon.
2. Cut out each body area icon.
3. Trace each body area icon on corresponding color paper to make multiple copies of each body area.
4. Make approximately five icons for each body area (sometimes more, sometimes less, depending on the number of descriptors the client wants to include for each body area).
6. Label each body area icon with descriptor words that are meaningful to the individual. Include a blank version of each body part so the individual will have the option of identifying a new descriptor when completing future body checks.

Optional step: Laminate the icons and file folder.

7. Attach Velcro to the body area icons as well as the inside of the file folder. Place strips of Velcro on the inside left of folder

to store all icons. Place small pieces of Velcro within the blank body outline in spaces that match the body area icons (e.g. if hand icons were made, place Velcro in the hand spaces).

8. Once the client grows proficient in identifying body signals, add a selection of body states and emotions to the back of the folder.
9. To make a large, life-sized version of the BCC:
 - Have the client lie down on a large piece of butcher or art paper and trace his body.
 - Have the student label the body with his or her name. Emphasize the following concept: "This is your body."
 - Follow the directions above, but make larger body part icons to use with the life-sized chart.
 - Once the student begins to understand that the body check is a method for noticing sensations within his or her own body, move to the smaller, portable version.