Irlen Coloured Light Activity

Tne method for determining which individuals may benefit from Irlen Filters is to alter the lighting environment and monitor the child’s behavior and performance doing various tasks under these different lighting environments.

***Step One:*** Obtain 40 or 60 watt light bulbs in red, blue, yellow, and green. Your local hardware store should carry colored light bulbs. They are also available from Bulbman at [www.bulbman.com](http://www.bulbman.com/).

***Step Two:*** Find a room without natural lighting where the only light source is from the incandescent coloured bulbs. If you are testing your child at night, be sure the room is closed off from the rest of the house or that there is not light from a hallway or adjacent room entering the testing room.

***Step Three:*** Do various activities with your child. Intermix activities that are easy and your child enjoys doing with activities that are difficult for your child. For example, have the child spend time in the room doing typical activities such as playing, doing puzzles, drawing, and cutting. In addition, have the child throw, catch, and roll a ball. Ask the child to point out body parts.

***Procedure:*** Have the child spend time in the room doing the activities under the various lighting conditions (fluorescent lighting, brightly and dimly lit room, coloured light bulbs). Watch the child’s behavior, ability to focus, stimming behavior, squinting, and the ability and quality of each activity.

Record your observations.

Send your observations, along with the Autism Evaluation Questionnaire, to the Irlen Institute, 5380 Village Road, Long Beach, California 90808.

Attached is a sample of observations recorded by another parent.

If you would like more information regarding this technology, obtain *Reading By the Colors* by Helen Irlen. The book is generally available at local bookstores, amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com, and may also be ordered directly from the publisher, Penguin Putnam (607-775-6352).

**Natural Light, Incandescent, Fluorescent, and**

**Dimmed or Raised Intensity Lighting**

On a very sunny day, Justin is blinded by sunlight, squints, covers his eyes, and does not seem to see. When it is a nice clear day, not too overcast or too sunny, Justin is always more focused; i.e., outdoor play is better and increased communications skills. Also, he can identify one’s face parts better and throw a ball better. During an overcast (i.e., rainy) day, Justin appears to look through things more and uses peripheral vision more. He will be distracted when asked to point (outdoors) to one’s face or body parts or when asked to catch or throw a ball.

In his kindergarten class, Justin will be fairly focused if all lights are turned off and there is only natural lighting in the room (provided it is not too overcast or sunny outdoors). With full fluorescent lighting in his school gym (doing activities like rolling a ball or balancing), he will be less focused and there will be snapping and stimming. Doing the same activities in the school gym, Justin will be more on task and concentrating harder with partial fluorescent lighting. In Justin’s class at a private gym with full fluorescent lighting, the teacher reports him squinting and using peripheral vision while catching, rolling, or throwing a ball. He squints while running, and this is a “very excited high energy run.” Moreover, Justin does not appear to see well when climbing down from gym equipment and cannot identify body parts under this lighting.

In a room with incandescent lighting (i.e., a 60-watt incandescent bulb was used in the closed walk-in closet utilized for testing), Justin could point to the eyes and mouth but not to the nose and ears of the worker. He looked ahead when pushing a car on the ground or when doing a puzzle. Ear snapping, clapping, and overall restlessness was observed to some degree while pushing the car or doing a puzzle.

Once light intensity in a room with incandescent lighting was raised, Justin found it harder to look straight into one’s face and peripheral vision was used more, even when his glasses were on. In the more intense light, he could not cut with scissors or draw as he kept looking into space. Throwing a ball, Justin was sensitive to the shadow or reflection made by the light and looked at his feet or at the ground more. Furthermore, catching the ball was difficult for him as he looked to the side.

In a dimly-lit room (incandescent bulb), there was no squinting and more direct eye contact to the task provided. Justin was less hyper and focused on one’s body parts more when asked to do so. Greater attentiveness was reported in drawing, tracing, and in doing a puzzle. No difference was seen in stacking blocks when in a dimly-lit room or in a more intensely-lit (incandescent bulb) room. Justin would become silly if a dimly-lit incandescent room would be made totally dark (lights turned off totally and door closed)…he would run to the light switch, finding it in the dark, and turn the lights on. Maybe he thought this was a game.

**Colour Light Sensitivity**

**(red, yellow, blue, or green light used as primary light source in closed walk-in closet; 40-watt red, blue or green lightbulb and 60-watt yellow)**

Upon placing Justin in a small room with a red light as the only light source, he became hyper (extreme reaction). His worker noted that Justin squinted and used some peripheral vision when she told him to point to parts of her face, and difficulty was seen finding some parts. Upon pushing a car on the floor (a typical activity for Justin) or doing a puzzle, he again squinted and tried to turn the red light off. There was excessive stimming and trouble focusing. When asked to draw and write with the red light on, he looked ahead at no particular thing and used some peripheral vision too. Justin looked down at his feet when asked to throw a ball and then catch it and could not roll a ball back and forth.

In a yellow-lit room, Justin squinted or looked down a lot. Via facilitated communication, he indicated that the light was too strong. Justin could not roll a ball back and forth (he looked around him and bounced the ball rather than rolling it). He could not focus when drawing but did better stacking blocks. When cutting a piece of paper, he appeared to look through the paper. In addition, Justin could not point well to his or his worker’s body parts.

In a room with a blue light on, he was calm and did not squint. As well, there was hardly any peripheral vision used. Justin was able to point to body parts when asked, except for ears. Justin focused well when pushing a car on the ground; he sang and made the sign for music. He did well with a puzzle and stacking blocks and with throwing and catching a ball. Justin focused directly on drawing a circle when asked but still required some hand-over-hand support.

In the green-lit room, he used peripheral vision much more than in the blue-lit room. He was less calm and more distracted than in the blue-lit room. He could not attend while drawing; and when stacking blocks, he fidgeted and kept putting blocks into his mouth. He stimmed more and kept turning the green light off.

**The completed Autism Questionnaire and/or Colored Light Activity can be sent to the Irlen Institute, 5380 Village Road, Long Beach, CA 90808. For a fee of $28, a report will be sent indicating whether the child or adult with Autism is a candidate for Irlen Colored Filters.**

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