

Making sense of sensory behaviour



What are sensory processing difficulties?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AOLDWvn38c&t=19s>

Our 7 senses:

- Touch
- Taste
- Auditory
- Sight
- Smell

- Muscles and joints
- Balance



What is sensory processing?

It is the way the brain receives, responds to and organises a sensory stimulus in order to behave appropriately

If a child has difficulties with Sensory Processing they might:

- ▶ Have poor attention
- ▶ Demonstrate inappropriate behaviour
- ▶ Be overly active or
- ▶ Be very lethargic and lacking in speed of activity
- ▶ Have difficulties in learning and retaining learnt skills
- ▶ Be unable to comfortably manage crowds or group settings
- ▶ Show immature social skills
- ▶ Suffer from heightened anxiety

How is it defined?

There are two main types of sensory processing disorders that children and adults experience. Sensory issues are usually defined as either:

- ▶ hypersensitivity (over-responsiveness) to sensory stimuli
- ▶ hyposensitivity (under-responsiveness) to sensory stimuli

Hypersensitivity (over responsive)

- ▶ Extreme response to or fear of sudden, high-pitched, loud, or metallic noises (flushing toilets, clanking silverware, etc.)
- ▶ May notice or be distracted by background noises that others don't seem to hear
- ▶ Fearful of surprise touches
- ▶ Avoids hugs and cuddling even with familiar adults
- ▶ Seems fearful of crowds
- ▶ Avoids standing in close proximity to others
- ▶ Doesn't enjoy games that involve touch e.g. tag
- ▶ Overly fearful of swings and playground equipment
- ▶ Extremely fearful of climbing or falling, even when there is no real danger
- ▶ Has poor balance and may fall often

Hyposensitivity (under responsive)

- ▶ A constant need to touch people or textures, even when it's inappropriate to do so
- ▶ Doesn't understand personal space of others
- ▶ Clumsy and uncoordinated movements
- ▶ Extremely high pain tolerance
- ▶ Often harms other children and/or pets when playing (i.e. doesn't understand his or her own strength)
- ▶ May be very fidgety and unable to sit still
- ▶ Enjoys movement-based play like spinning, jumping, etc.
- ▶ Seems to be a "thrill seeker" and can be dangerous at times

Calming sensory strategies

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKVlilO-RBg&t=58s>

- ▶ Heavy work
- ▶ Deep pressure
- ▶ Chewing
- ▶ Deep breathing
- ▶ Calm space

A quiet, safe space



A quiet space can be as simple as:

- A corner with a bean bag or chair and some pillows
- A small tent or canopy made from a sheet
- A basket of books or fiddle toys
- Calming music and headphones



Calming tactile input

There are lots of different ways to provide tactile input:

- Tactile box - rice, sand, dry lentils, shaving foam
- Tactile activities - Playdoh, collage, water beads
- Deep pressure - weighted animals, door stops, weighted snakes, cuddle



Calming oral input

Examples of how to provide oral sensory feedback include:

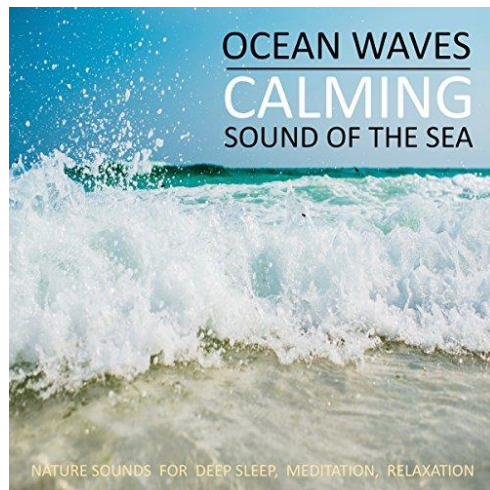
- Sucking - thick milkshake/smoothie through a straw, ice cubes
- Chewing - sensory snacks, chewy's
- Blowing - ping pong ball through a straw, feathers, bubbles
- Deep breathing



Calming auditory input

Examples of how to provide auditory sensory feedback include:

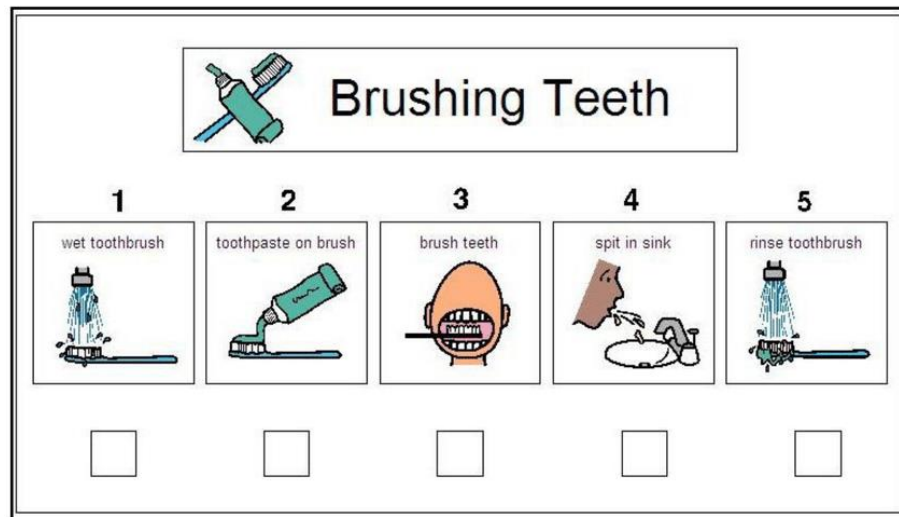
- Use a quiet and calm voice
- White noise - rainforest, beach, rain
- Calming Music



Calming visual input

Examples of how to provide oral sensory feedback include:

- Visual timetable to support routine
- Dim the lights
- Clear, clutter free space
- Calm down bottles



Calming movement input

Examples of how to provide oral sensory feedback include:

- Rocking
- Swaying
- Swinging
- Bouncing



Alerting sensory strategies

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzBbwdWuXEM&t=136s>

- ▶ Movement
- ▶ Crunchy
- ▶ Sour
- ▶ Music
- ▶ Fidgets

Movement



Crunchy



© Amy's Healthy Baking

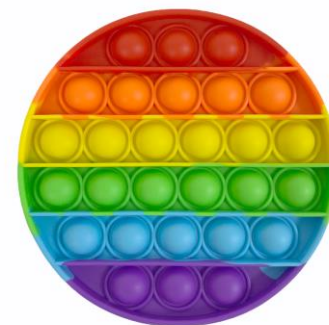
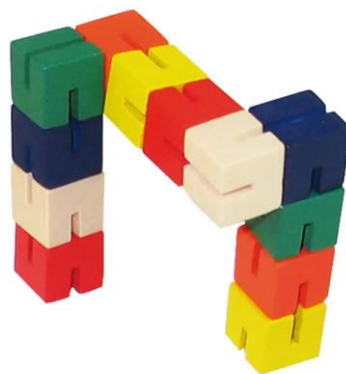
Sour



Music



Fidgets



Useful websites

- ▶ NHS - Sensory Processing

<https://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/childrens-therapies-the-pod/occupational-therapy/sensory-processing/>

- ▶ YouTube - Stella Parkinson, Sensory Processing

<https://www.youtube.com/@stellaparkinson6052>

- ▶ Amazon - Sensory fidget toys

https://www.amazon.co.uk/s?k=sensory+fidget+toys&i=toys&crid=U2J3N61GMDG2&sprefix=sensory+fidget+toys%2Ctoys%2C63&ref=nb_sb_noss_1

Any questions?

