

# Strategies to Try at Home for your School-aged Child



# What is sensory processing?

We all take in sensory information constantly. This is both from within our body and from outside it.

Sensory processing is the central nervous system's (spinal cord and brain) acknowledgement of and the organisation of all of this sensory information. This is needed everyday for our ability to do all of our jobs and activities.

When our senses are integrated correctly, we are able to respond appropriately to the sensation. For example, we move away from something hot or breath in deeply to enjoy a favourite scent.

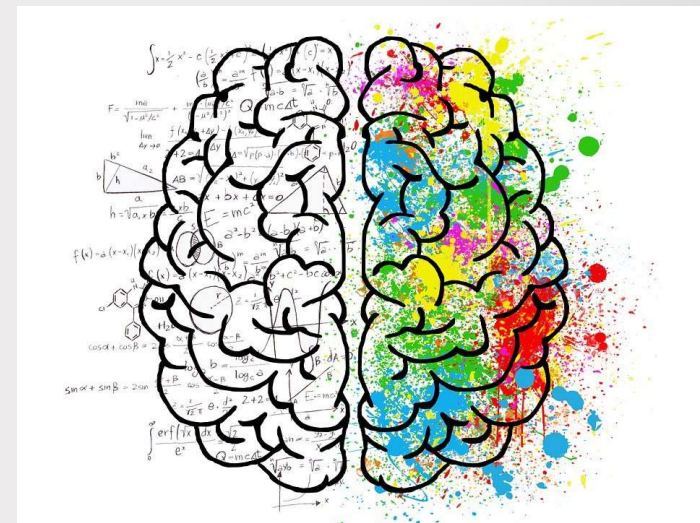


# Sensory processing

We are receiving sensory information **all of the time** and from **all eight senses**.

This information tells us **all about our current world** and **how we should respond**.

We only use about **5%** of this information and either **ignore or filter out** the other 95%.



# Sensory processing dysfunction

Difficulties can arise when we filter out more than 95% of the information or we let in more than 5% of the information.

This affects our overall arousal level – our whole body's ability to change our level of alertness.

Even small disruptions to sensory process have an impact on our function, participation and self-esteem.



# What you can do...

- Be a detective
- Look at what might be interfering with your child's success in any activity
- Make changes; take something out, put something in.

# Essential kit

- Exercise ball to sit on/roll over/bounce on
- Blankets to swaddle in or a beanbag cushion
- Heavy work activities such as sweeping, carrying wet washing
- A backpack with water and favourite items and books
- Something to drink/eat
- Bear hugs from you
- A favourite smell on a tissue
- Headphones, a cap or hood, sunglasses
- Some vibration toy to trial
- Now and next visual support.

# Oral support strategies

## **Under responsive**

- Strong flavoured foods
- Vibration (electric toothbrush)
- Sucking, blowing, making noises, whistling
- Crunchy snacks
- Sour or fizzy foods
- Use small sensory activities as part of their communication system.

## **Over responsive**

- Deep pressure to lips and palate
- Chewing
- Forewarn of need to touch
- Build choice into essential activities with a definite end point
- Use bland tasting foods
- Recued the pressure n the child to eat foods they are unsure of
- Avoid strong perfumes, scented cosmetics, fabric conditioners or air fresheners
- Work away from areas with food smells.

# Interoception support strategies

## **Under responsive**

- Visual supports and schedule for going to the toilet or having a drink or meal
- Visual supports for putting on a coat
- Visual supports for what clothing to take off when the weather is hot
- Reminders to check their body for cuts, scrapes and bruises and to tell you
- Develop signals to help the individual recognise hot/angry/tired and support them
- Starting to practice body scans.

## **Over responsive**

- Practice a body scan to identify where the feeling is and add a name of a feeling – for example, worried/thirsty/tired
- Spot checks – for example, how are you feeling? Where do you feel this? What does it feel like?
- Practicing heartbeat games – do fast exercise, feel your heartbeat, how is this different from other times your heart races?
- Practice lowering heart rate.



# Books we recommend...

- Angie Voss OTR : Understanding Your Child's Sensory Signals 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition
- Sharon Heller: Too Loud Too Bright Too fast Too Tight: What to do if you are Sensory Defensive in an Over Stimulating World
- Carol Kranowitz (2007) Out of Synch Child: Recognising and Coping with Sensory processing Disorder
- Carol Kranowitz (2006) The Out of Synch Child has Fun: Activities for Kids with Sensory Processing Difficulties
- Dr Lucy Miller: Sensational Kids

# Websites we recommend...

- [www.spdfoundation.org](http://www.spdfoundation.org)
- [CanChild](#)
- [The Spiral Foundation](#)
- [Sensory Integration Education Home](#)
- [Sensory Processing Disorder \(SPD\) \(sensory-processing-disorder.com\)](http://sensory-processing-disorder.com)
- [Welcome To The SPD Network • Sensory Processing Disorder \(sinetwork.org\)](http://sinetwork.org)
- [S.I. Focus - The Most Innovative & Adaptable Platform In The World Of Gaming \(sifocus.com\)](http://sifocus.com)
- [Your Therapy Source](#)
- [Sensory Direct | Weighted Blankets, Sensory Toys & Equipment](#)
- [SEN Teaching Resources & Special Educational Supplies | TTS \(tts-group.co.uk\)](http://tts-group.co.uk)
- [Sensory Toys, Special Needs Toys, Multi Sensory Equipment and Sensory Rooms](#)
- [Sensory Toys, Special Needs Toys & Autism Toys, Unbeatable Prices! \(sensorytoywarehouse.com\)](http://sensorytoywarehouse.com)
- [Autism Education Trust](#)

# Tactile support strategies

## **Under responsive**

- A variety of touch activities – massage, exploring objects with hands
- Contrasting tactile experiences within learning – sandpaper letters, drawing in shaving foam
- Fidget toys
- A good rub with a bath towel
- A shower rather than a bath – a constant change in sensation.

## **Over responsive**

- Do not approach from behind
- Use firm, constant pressure, not light touch
- Let them control the touch and hugs
- Forewarn before any activity involving touch
- Avoid sitting/standing in the middle of larger groups
- Position away from main thoroughfares in cafés and class.

# Proprioceptive support strategies

## **Under responsive**

- Pushing, pulling, moving heavy objects – ‘heavy work’ activities with a purpose
- Carrying books or boxes around to ‘help’
- Door frame pushes, chair push ups
- Push ups or handstands
- Stand to draw/write or lie on the floor to read
- Sitting crossed legged
- Chairs with backs and sides
- Dance sacks
- Digging in the garden or sandpit
- Dragging wet washing out of the machine
- Sweeping
- Sit on an exercise ball to watch television.

# Vestibular support strategies

## **Under responsive**

- Structure movement activities into routine before asking them to sit still
- Allow them to lean against objects when required to balance/sit down
- Allow them to seek more supportive seating
- Move and sit cushion or even vibration for work and mealtimes
- Structure movement breaks during longer seated activities and in lessons
- Provide activities requiring different body positions (obstacle courses are good).

## **Over responsive**

- Allow individual to control the movement
- Do not force the person into movement situations or environments that are scary
- Use playground/park equipment that allows their feet to remain on or close to the ground
- Slow and rhythmical/predictable movement first- linear is good
- Avoid fast movements before expecting them to settle
- Individual may work better in different body orientation – for example, lying down.

# Visual support strategies

## **Under responsive**

- Highlight area for attention on paper or computer screen
- Remove visual clutter from home/workspace
- Use bright colours
- Provide clear boundaries or borders
- Use activities with movement in them to keep stimulating the eyes
- Use computers.

## **Over responsive**

- Avoid fluorescent or bright lights when possible
- Allow wearing of peaked cap in sunlight or anywhere
- Reduce visual distractions - de-clutter
- Allow time to retreat from bright environments - or use sensory supports
- Avoid flickering and flashing lights
- Forewarn about bright environments.

# Auditory support strategies

## **Under responsive**

- Give strong auditory cue - clap/bell ring
- Gain eye contact before giving instructions
- Individual should be positioned close to the sound source
- Use other sensory systems to support (visual cues)
- Short and clear directions - chunk information with frequent pauses to allow processing time
- Allow individual to make noise themselves.

## **Over responsive**

- Reduce auditory stimuli (room acoustics, echoes, background noise)
- Do not talk over a distinct background noise
- Make noise/speak in the visual line of the individual
- Give visual instructions
- Have a quiet corner or retreat
- Wear ear plugs/headphones or have background music on
- Avoid going to noisy environments without supports in place
- Forewarn individual of loud sound whenever possible.