

# When Difficulties in Sensory Processing Occur

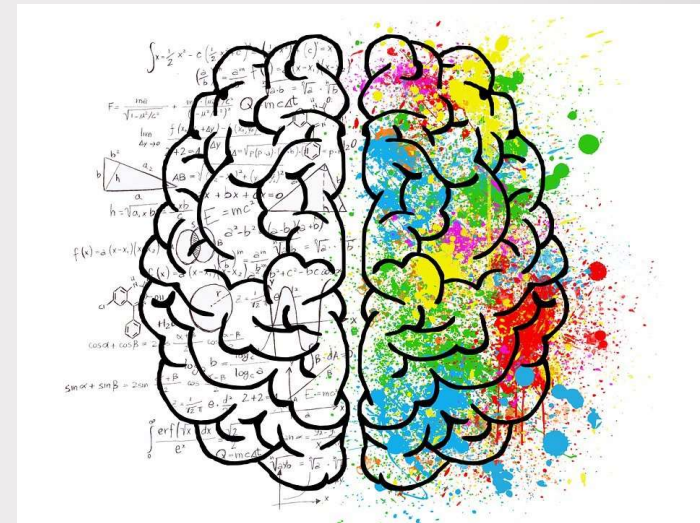


# Sensory processing

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

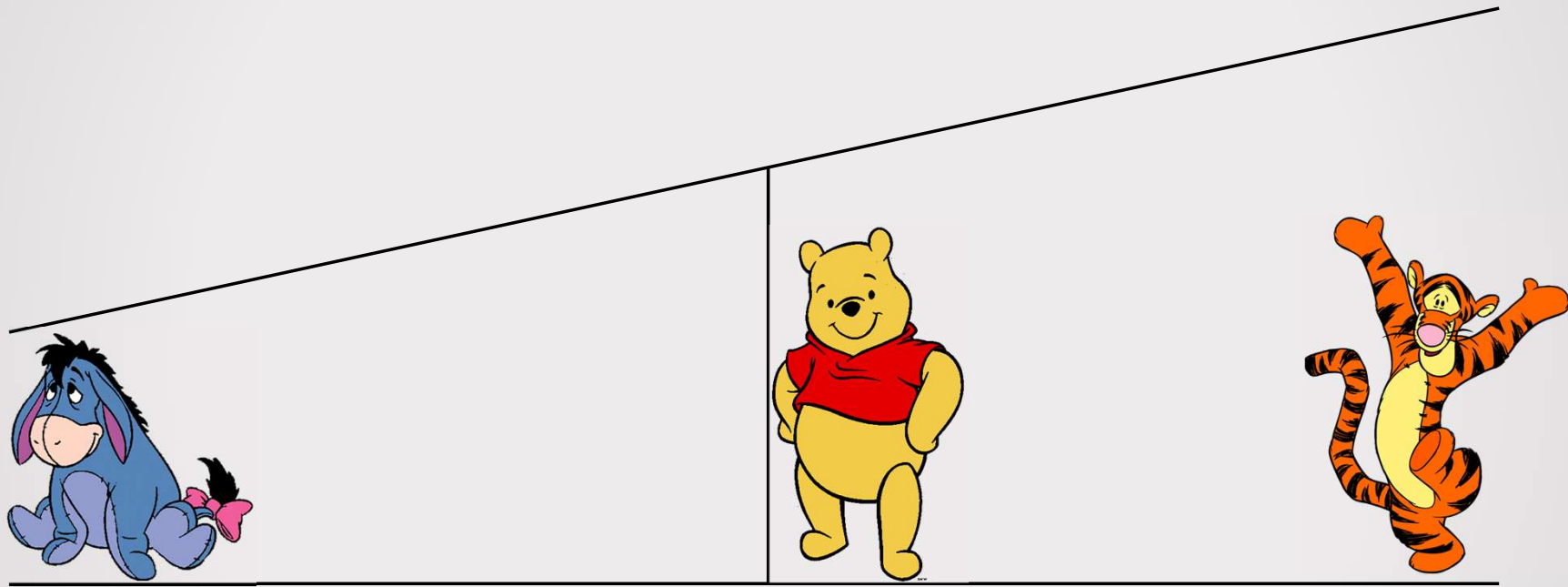
Difficulties can arise when we filter out more than 95% of the information or we let in more than 5% of the information.

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.



# Modulation or regulation of our responses to information



Under aroused – ‘Eeyore’  
Grumpy, bored, passive

Just Right – ‘Winnie the Pooh’  
Best level of alertness for the  
task we are doing

Over excited or overloaded – ‘Tigger’  
Giddy or hyper  
Fear/freeze/flight/fight

# What we might see...

## Tactile

### Under responsive

- Drops items often
- Clumsy pencil grasp
- Messy dresser/eater
- Unsure where their bruises came from
- High pain threshold.

### Over responsive

- Overreacts to unexpected touch
- Doesn't like grooming
- Difficulty standing in line
- Dislikes clothes/labels
- Difficulty sitting in groups
- Picky eater – strong texture and temperature preferences.

### Seeker

- Fidgeting
- Stroking
- Exploring items with hands
- Loves messy play



# What we might see...

## Proprioception

### Over responsive

- No neurological process or observable behaviours to support this category exist.



### Under responsive

- Clumsy
- Bumping into things
- 'All thumbs' / 'two left feet'.

### Seeker

- Banging hands/pencils on table
- Rough with peers
- Bumping and crashing deliberately into things
- Loves rough and tumble play
- Purposefully falls off things.

# What we might see...

## Vestibular

### **Under responsive**

- Poor balance
- Reduced protective reactions to movement
- Clumsy
- Sedentary – prefers table top activities to sports and active play.

### **Over responsive**

- Overreacts when feet are lifted off the ground
- Avoids swings
- Avoids having feet elevated
- Fear of steps or stairs
- Motion sickness.

### **Seeker**

- Bounces up and down
- Constantly moving
- Can't sit still at a table or on the carpet
- Spins around/rocks.

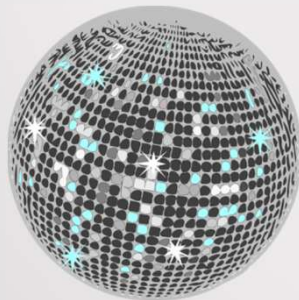


# What we might see...

## Visual

### **Under responsive**

- Difficulty in finding something in a busy background
- Struggles to locate friends in a crowd
- Struggles to find their place on a page.



### **Over responsive**

- Doesn't like bright lights
- Prefers darker rooms
- Covers or shades eyes
- Excessive blinking or eye watering when background light changes
- Wants to wear peaked caps, keeps hood up or long hair over their face.

### **Seeker**

- Looking at shiny objects
- Flicking fingers
- Enjoys flashing lights and colours



# What we might see...

## Auditory

### Under responsive

- Not responding to instructions or name
- Slow response to novel environmental sounds
- Poor auditory discrimination even in low levels of background noise.



### Over responsive

- Difficulty filtering out background noise
- Sensitive to lawnmowers, hairdryers and vacuum cleaners
- Difficulty in coping in assembly, PE, lunch halls, swimming
- Covers ears
- Creates own noise to block out external noise
- Challenging behaviour in order to leave a situation.

### Seeker

- Shouting
- Banging objects to make a noise
- Putting music up very loud.

# What we might see...

## Oral Tactile, Olfactory and Gustatory

### Under responsive

- May have unclear speech (language content is unaffected)
- Eating difficulties
- Messy/slow eater
- Dribbling, chapped lower lip.

### Over responsive

- Doesn't like having teeth brushed
- Picky eater – specific flavour preferences, restricted diet
- Preference for bland foods or uses ketchup as a flavour masker
- Gagging at strong smells.

### Seeker

- Mouthing/biting and putting usual things in mouth
- Likes strong flavours and smells
- Makes peculiar mouth movements.



# What we might see...

## Interoception

### **Under responsive**

- Waits until last minute before rushing to the toilet
- Struggles to toilet train with frequent accidents
- Never feels hungry or thirsty
- Can be very poorly and not tell you
- Doesn't stop, even when exhausted
- Emotions are absent or extreme.

### **Over responsive**

- Frequent toilet trips
- Frequent complaints of aches, pains and discomfort
- Limping for longer than expected after an ankle injury has gone
- Refusal to remove jacket once inside as they still feel cold
- Always hungry or thirsty
- Overly dramatic with a minor ailment – for example, a stubbed toe or runny nose.