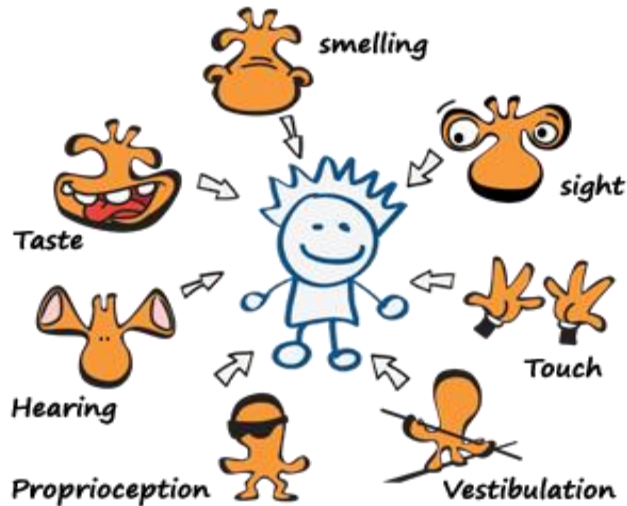


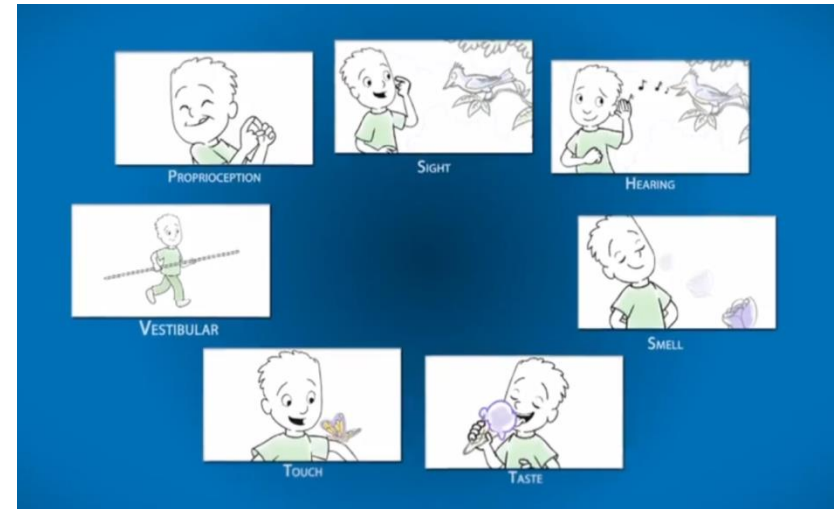


Sensory Processing

Information for Parents



Our Senses – we have 7!



The 'Hidden Senses'

The Vestibular Sensory System (sense of balance) is located in the inner ear and provides the body with **information about movement** (up, down, left or right), gravity and the speed of the movement. It tells us where our body is in space. The brain receives this input during movement activities.

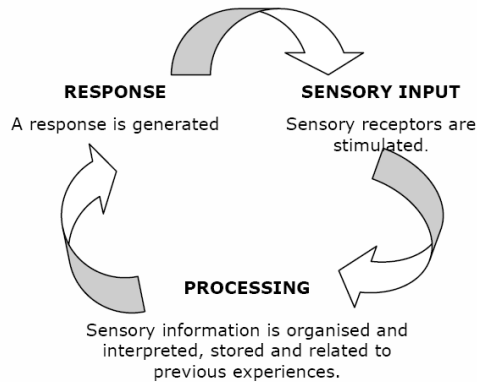
The Proprioceptive Sensory System (sense of body awareness) provides **information from the muscles, joints and tendons** telling the body where it or the particular body part is at any given moment. **The brain** receives this input by doing 'heavy work' activities, e.g. pushing and pulling games, lifting or carrying heavy objects, playing with stiff putty, and lying under heavy blankets.

Sensory Processing is:

The ability of the brain to take in, sort out and process information from the world around us.

The ability to process sensory information and generate an appropriate and graded response.

This is an ongoing and constant process!



Examples:

- A cold shower
- Strong perfumes
- Woolly clothing or labels on clothes
- The feel of jelly in your mouth
- The taste of coffee
- Cluttered wardrobe
- Rollercoasters
- Background noise



How the Senses Respond

(over responsive)-Turned up



Just right-level



(under responsive)-Turned down



I hate having my hair cut, washed or brushed

I shield my eyes from bright lights or stare at them

I can be very selective with food and resist to certain textures or smell

I can be oversensitive to loud sounds such as blenders or car horns

I like to chew on different materials and textiles

I can touch others too soft or too hard

I have poor fine motor skills such as hand writing, cutting or fastening buttons

I cannot tolerate specific textiles or tags on my clothing

I like to smell people, food or objects

I have difficulty dressing myself

I can detest being tickled and cuddled or I can adore being squeezed and massaged

I have poor gross motor skills such as riding a bike or climbing a stairway

I can be clumsy and stumble over things

I like to wear the same shoes regardless of the weather or I always want to walk barefoot

I can walk on my tiptoes

Difficulty with Sensory Processing



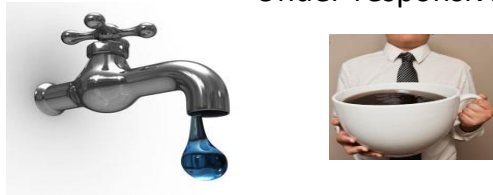
Difficulty with sensory processing happens when the brain cannot sort out, filter, organise, analyse, and connect or integrate sensory messages.

It is like a “traffic jam” in the brain, with some bits of sensory information getting “tied up in traffic”. Certain parts of the brain then do not get the sensory information they need to do their job.

Over-responsive



Under-responsive



Behaviours we may see:

- Over-activity and/or under-activity
- Sensory seeking behaviour, e.g. touching things/ people excessively, squeezing people, chewing or smelling items
- Overly sensitive to sensory input, e.g. difficulty tolerating noises or messy play
- Difficulty concentrating and sitting still
- Anxiety and fear
- Withdrawal and avoidance
- Aggression
- “Shutdown”

How can we help?

It is important to remember that everyone responds differently to sensory information.

What are **your** sensory preferences?

How do **you** respond to noise, light, touch, movement, etc.?

We only need to intervene if sensory difficulties are affecting a child’s participation in daily activities!

- Think about your child and the behaviours they are displaying or finding challenging
- What sensory areas do you think your child is having difficulties with?
- Look for patterns

Become a Sensory Detective!

Sensations my child enjoys or seeks:	Sensation my child avoids/ dislikes:	Sensations my child ignores/ is slow to respond to:

Regulation Ideas – **calming** strategies

Sense	Calming
Touch (tactile)	Deep pressure touch, bear hugs, massage, vibration
Smell (olfactory)	Calming scents such as lavender, vanilla
Mouth (oral motor)	Licking, chewing or crunching, sucking or blowing, sweet soft or warm textures
Vision	Dim lights, enclosed space such as a tent, slow moving objects such as lava lamps, clear and uncluttered environment, glitter bottle
Hearing (auditory)	Quiet environments, slow tempo low pitch soft sounds, relaxation CDs, white noise
Movement (vestibular)	Back and forth movement (swinging), rocking, slow movement
Movement (proprioception)	Heavy work for muscles and joints, e.g. pulling, pushing, lifting, jumping, climbing

Regulation Ideas – **alerting** strategies

Sense	Alerting
Touch (tactile)	Light touch, tickle, extreme temperatures
Smell (olfactory)	Strong scents such as lemon, spices
Mouth (oral motor)	Crunching strong flavours, cold temperatures
Vision	Bright colours, flashing lights, spinning objects, busy cluttered environment
Hearing (auditory)	Loud volume, quick tempo music, high pitch
Movement (vestibular)	Circular movement, spinning, fast unpredictable movement
Movement (proprioception)	Usually these activities are calming

Tips for Creating a Sensory Friendly Home

- Create a quiet cosy chill-out space in your home.
- Create opportunities for big body movement activities (access to outdoors if possible).
- Create a daily visual schedule (for ideas see do2learn.com).
- Use of a timer to help with transitions between activities. There is an unlimited number of visual timers available on YouTube.
- Be mindful of noise levels in the room.
- Establish tidy up routines after play, mealtimes etc.
- Use of natural light where possible.

Creating a Cosy Area



What is it?

It's a safe calm space for your child to access throughout their day. It can be used when your child is upset, distressed or when they need some time to chill and relax!

How do I make it?

There is no set recipe or instructions for making a cosy area. You can make your cosy area fit your home, working with whatever space you have available!

You may make a **cosy area** by blocking off a corner of a room, using a pop-up tent, using sheets & blankets to create a den etc.

Use your imagination and together create your own unique cosy area.



What do I put in it?

- **Textures:** Beanbag, cushions, blankets, favourite soft toy, fun things to feel (fidgets, playdough). Texture boxes (fill a lunch box with your favourite feely items –rice, slime, things from nature such as shells, pine cones, leaves and twigs).
- **Things to look at:** Torch lights, lava lamp, snow globe, fairy lights.
- **Things to listen to:** Headphones, soft music, home-made musical instruments.
- **Things to smell:** Scented hand lotion, scented playdough.
- **Oral Activities:** Blow bubbles, straws and cotton wool, whistles blow toys, snacks.
- **Be creative** with what you put into your cosy corner and be sure to include things your child enjoys.

