

SENSORY ISSUES

Healthy Young Minds

What are sensory issues?

How alert you feel affects your brain's ability to process sensory input. Identifying your own or your child's arousal state and learning/teaching them how to self-regulate (how to change how alert they feel) can massive help reduce sensory seeking behaviour which can be challenging at times.

Children with sensory processing difficulties are generally placed into two categories. The child is **OVER** or **UNDER** responsive to stimulation such as from sight, sound, touch, movement etc. For a child with sensory issues, processing the feelings of being hot or cold, tired, hungry, or exposed to lights and sound can be challenging and overwhelming.



What to look out for in your child?

- Intolerance to textures and certain clothing
- Intolerance to certain noises or loud noises
- Food textures and colours causing extreme responses
- Difficulty using fine motor skills: using pens or buttons on clothing
- Difficulty with change or transitions from one place or activity to another
- Clumsiness: bumping into things or people

What can you do to help?

- **BE AWARE.** Look at the environment to see if it is creating difficulties. Can you change anything?
- **BE CREATIVE.** Think of some positive sensory experiences. Things that your child enjoys or that seem to calm them.
- **BE PREPARED.** Tell your child about possible sight, noise, taste etc. they may experience in different environments.



		UNDER-sensitive
Taste E.g. strong tasting foods or textures colour		As long at the child is getting a varied diet this is not a problem Gradually introduce new food with a reward
Touch E.g. extreme pain threshold, smear: poo, chews everything, extreme response to touch	warning the child if you are about to touch them Remembering that a hug may be painful rather than comforting Gradually introduce new textures with a reward	For smearing, offering alternatives to handle with similar textures, such as jelly, or cornflour and water For chewing, offering chew toys, straws or hard sweets Also can wear Lycra clothing underneath clothes Weighted blankets
Balance E.g. enjoys/hates to rock, swing, spin or car journeys.	Break down activities into small, more easily manageable steps and using visual cues (things that they can see) such as a finish line.	Using a rocking horses, swings, roundabouts, seesaw or catching a ball
Body awareness E.g. knowing where our bodies are in space, and how different body parts are moving.	Give longer to do fine motor actives such as doing up buttons, shoe laces and writing. Offer 'fine motor' activities like lacing boards, picking up things with washing pegs, threading beads or penne pasta onto string	Put furniture around the edge of a room Weighted blankets to provide deep pressure The 'arm's-length rule' to judge personal space - this means standing an arm's length away from other people

Here are some more ideas that might help:

➤ **Some useful websites:**

<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/behaviour/sensory-world>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLrTRUGXUz4&feature=youtu.be&t=3>: Managing sensory problems - University of Leicester video (also in other languages).

➤ **Some useful Books:**

Laurie, C. (2014) [*Sensory Strategies*](#) London: The National Autistic Society



Higashida, Naoki (2014) [*The Reason I Jump: One boy's voice from the silence of autism.*](#)
Sceptre
Grandin, T. (2006) [*Thinking in Pictures.*](#) Bloomsbury Publishing

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