

What is Sensory Processing?

Sensory processing is a central nervous system function which involves the brain's ability to organize and to make sense of different kinds of sensations (movement, touch, vision, taste, smell, body sense and hearing) entering the brain at any given time, and at the same time for use in daily life.

Sensory processing is based in the part of the brain known as the brain stem. The brain stem contains an important "filtering" system which has the ability to filter or prioritize incoming sensory information enabling it to determine if this information should be noticed or disregarded.

Why is this important?

Sensory processing will have an affect on all developmental systems (motor skills, social/emotional skills, speech/language skills, and cognitive/learning skills), as well as the ability to learn and perform complex adaptive behaviors and skills.

What happens in a typical sensory processing system?

- * Learns to move against gravity. (Rolling, sitting, walking)
- *Learns appropriate balance and protective responses
- *Use sense of touch to make discriminations about the world
- *Show ability to attend to task and learn from earlier activities.
- *Develop good visual skills by learning to use both eyes together
- *Use both sides of their body

"When the flow of sensation is disorganized, life can be like a rush-hour traffic jam."

-- Dr. A. Jean Ayers



How can I recognize when a child does not have typical sensory processing skills?

- * Child may appear unnaturally clumsy
- *Child may exhibit behavior problems
- *Child may have problems with social skills
- *Child may have focus/attention problems
- *Child may exhibit fine and/or gross motor problems
- *Child may exhibit a speech/language delay

When a child does not have the ability to accurately and reliably receive sensory input, their ability to process information and create responses is disrupted. These children are not aware of what they are doing and why and will seek the type of sensory input they need in inappropriate ways.

Parents and teachers are the best line of defense in identifying and addressing these concerns.

How do we help children find their own sensory compensations?

*Be a good observer

(This will help you begin to discover the child's sensory needs)

*Remember that **touch and movement** are just as important to development as the basic five senses (see, touch, taste, hear, smell)

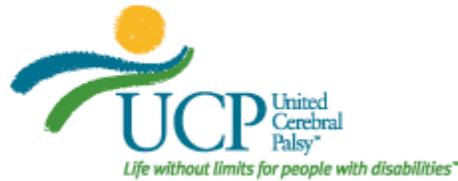
*Be sensitive to a child's reactions to different sensations

*Look for clues for what "works" for the child and be ready to build on abilities and successes

The following activities may be helpful for anyone who cares for a child with sensory needs. All of these activities should be used in moderation to avoid sensory overload.

<u>Arousing Activities</u>	<u>Calming Activities:</u>
light touch	deep pressure
tickling	hugging
vibration	massaging
fast bouncing	wrap in blanket
rolling	slow rocking
spinning	straight-line
sudden stops/starts	push/pull heavy
objects tone	quiet singing
change in pitch	soft music
loud music	chewing gum
bright lights/colors	soft light/colors
very cold foods	warm food
salty/spicy/sour	bland foods

Please note every child is different and may react differently to these activities.



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**Understanding Disabilities
Creating Opportunities**

Sensory Processing

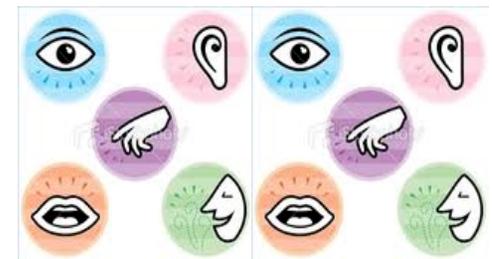
Does your child exhibit...

**Oversensitivity -or
undersensitivity-
to touch, smell, sound, or sight?**

**Oversensitivity-or
undersensitivity-
to movement sensations?**

**Unusually high or low activity
level?**

**Problems with motor
coordination?**



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