

# Sensory Processing Difficulties



## What are sensory processing difficulties?

Sensory processing difficulties occur when the brain struggles to receive and respond effectively to information that comes in through the senses.

## Can my child be over and under responsive to sensory input?

Sensory processing problems tend to come in two types, under- and over-sensitivity, although it is common for one child to experience both kinds. This is often affected by what has happened during the day, did the child have a good night sleep etc.

## Why does my child have meltdowns when they get home after school when the smallest thing goes wrong?

Children often experience a significant amount of sensory input/overload through all their senses in the school setting. This can be noise in the classroom, bright lights, busy displays on the walls, smells in the dinner hall, children bumping and crashing into each other etc. Most children try to contain their frustration in the school setting as they want to be accepted by all the other children and desperately do not want to stand out. However, when they get home they are in their safe environment and they let it all out.

## Why does my child make so much noise when they are auditory sensitive?

Children that are auditory sensitive often struggle to cope with loud or unexpected noise. They can however cope with their own noise and therefore often make their own sounds to cut out the noise around them.



## How to cope with my child always smelling everything?

Try to introduce opportunities throughout the day as part of a sensory diet where your child is encouraged to use their sense of smell. Make up a smell box filled with a variety of smells in containers e.g., perfume, essential oils, coffee, vanilla, marmite etc. Encourage your child to choose a smell every 90-120 minutes and let him/her smell it. This approach can be used in all the different sensory areas.

## How can I calm my child down before bedtime?

Look at the whole bedroom as a sensory area. Include items such as a lava lamp that is low lighting and slow movement. If your child enjoys music to relax play calming music. Introduce a nice smell if that is what your child enjoys. Provide an oral sensory tool if needed. Make sure that you follow a wind down routine where your child takes a bath, listen to a story etc. No screen time should be involved.

Deep pressure activities can be useful e.g., rolling an exercise ball over your child's body whilst applying deep pressure, roll them in a blanket and squeeze them, massage their body or just feet and hands etc.

A weighted blanket can be placed on the bed. This blanket should not weigh more than 5-10 % of a child's body weight. Make sure that it is placed from the chest down and not over his/her head.

Some children enjoy sleeping in a sleeping bag or being tucked in with a bed sheet.

## How much should a weighted blanket and other weighted equipment weigh?

The advice is to make sure that it does not weigh more than 5-10% of a child's body weight.





## How can I help my child with attending a party or big social gathering that may be noisy?

Make sure that you always arrive first when the room is still quiet and relaxed, and your child will then adapt as the noise and amount of people increase. Take sensory tools along such as ear defenders, headphones, a hat, sunglasses, fidget toy or a chewy toy.

## How to get my child to wear socks as they must be “just right”?

Buy seamless socks that are available from a variety of stores online. Tight compression socks are an option as they apply deep pressure that is calming for the nervous system. Deep pressure massage of feet before attempting to put them on may also help.

## How do I stop my child being very physical with others?

This could be due to decreased body awareness and a poor proprioceptive system. Encourage your child to regularly engage in heavy/hard work activity throughout the day (as part of a sensory diet). This could include pushing with hands/back/head/feet against a large exercise ball, wheelbarrow walking, hanging on monkey bars, resistance tunnel or wearing a body sock and playing in it. Let your child wear compression clothes that will provide deep pressure to the skin.

# Additional Resources



## Books:

### **The Out-of-Sync Child (1998)**

Carol Stock Kranowitz. ISBN 0-399-52386-3.

This book is available to order from most booksellers and is also on [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

The author has written this book for parents, teachers and health care professionals and provides a reader-friendly overview of sensory integration and includes checklists and questionnaires of symptoms and strategies to use.

### **The Out-of-Sync Child Has Fun – Activities for kids with Sensory Integration Dysfunction (2003)**

Carol Stock Kranowitz ISBN 0-399-52843-1. Available from [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

This is a follow-on book to 'The-Out-Of-Sync Child' and provides a huge variety of activities that have been tried and tested to be used at home or at school.

### **Answers to Questions Teachers Ask About Sensory Integration (2001)**

Kranowitz & Szklut

This book is a useful tool for schools and provides an overview of sensory integration, activities and checklists to be used with a child with sensory integration difficulties.

### **Too Loud too Bright too Fast too Tight (2002)**

Sharon Heller, Ph.D.

There is hope for the sensory defensive. Sharon claims this book will change your life.

### **Building Bridges through Sensory Integration (2006)**

Ellen Yack, Paula Aquilla, Shirley Sutton.

Therapy for children with autism and other pervasive developmental disorders.

### **Sensory Circuits – A Sensory Motor Skills Programme for Children (2008)**

Jane Horwood, LDA

### **Helping Your Child with Extreme Picky Eating (2015)**

Katja Rowell, MD and Jenny McGlothlin, MS, SLP. Good resource for advice with eating difficulties.

### **Understanding Your Child's Sensory Signals**

Angie Voss, OTR

### **Interoception: The Eighth Sensory System**

Kelly Mahler



# Additional Resources



## Websites:

### **Sensory Processing Disorder**

[www.sensory-processing-disorder.com](http://www.sensory-processing-disorder.com) - user friendly website full of practical advice.

### **Autism information**

<https://www.autism.org.uk/> - the National Autistic Society which has excellent information, advice, and support. Autism awareness packs are available from the NAS for teachers.

### **Aspergers information**

[www.aspergerfoundation.org.uk](http://www.aspergerfoundation.org.uk) - this is the website of a small, registered charity in London which provides resources on training, information sheets and frequently asked questions.

### **Support for families with disabled children**

[www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk) - this is the website of a UK-wide charity providing advice, information, and support to parents of all children with additional needs and gives information on local resources.

### **Sensory courses**

<https://www.sensoryintegration.org.uk/> - provides accredited, high quality sensory courses for therapists, parents, teachers and other professionals.

### **Safety education**

<https://www.kidpower.org/> - global non-profit leader in personal safety education for all ages.

### **Youth mental health support**

<https://www.koothplc.com/> - free, safe, anonymous online support for young people.

### **Picky eaters**

<https://yourkidstable.com/> - useful and very practical advice and support with eating difficulties.