



# Autism Tip Sheet

From the Elida School District Autism Team

## Sensory and Meltdowns

Some people with autistic spectrum disorders appear to sense the world in different ways to other people. Some seem to be hypersensitive (receive too much information via their senses) and some appear to be hyposensitive (receive too little information). They misinterpret everyday sensory information, such as touch, sound, and movement. Some individuals may find certain sounds or colors disturbing, while other individuals may not even hear the sound or notice the color at all. When sensory overload happens, a meltdown could occur.

### **Characteristics of Sensory Integration Dysfunction**

Following are some signs that a child may have a dysfunction in sensory-motor processing:

- Repetitive behaviors such as spinning, head banging or flapping of hands
- Poor coordination and handwriting
- Poor eye contact
- Short attention span
- Avoidance or over reaction to touch
- Difficulty identifying objects by touch
- Clumsiness and lack of balance
- Repetitive or slow speech
- Lack of body image and awareness
- Raised shoulders
- Fear of movement, avoids motor play
- Fear and anxiety in new situations or changed routines.

### **What to Do**

- Simplify directions, keep them concrete
- Earplugs/headphones
- Avoid crowding too much information on one page
- Enlarge print on paper/worksheets
- Provide only needed materials
- Color Coding
- Grips on pencils, scissors, etc
- Allow use of small quiet objects (for example stress balls)

### **Managing a Meltdown**

- Stay calm.
- Be assertive.
- Don't touch.
- Give a lot of personal space.
- Say "Take a deep breath and close your eyes please" or give solitude – an area to him/herself.
- Give a clear direction of what to do.
- As soon as they start to calm down, encourage 'that was the smart and the right thing to do'.
- Find a calming activity for him to do.
- Body language is calm – not imposing.
- Avoid arguments.

Sources:

[Autism-help.org](http://Autism-help.org)

[Managing Autism Meltdowns](#)