

Understanding Sensory Needs in Children

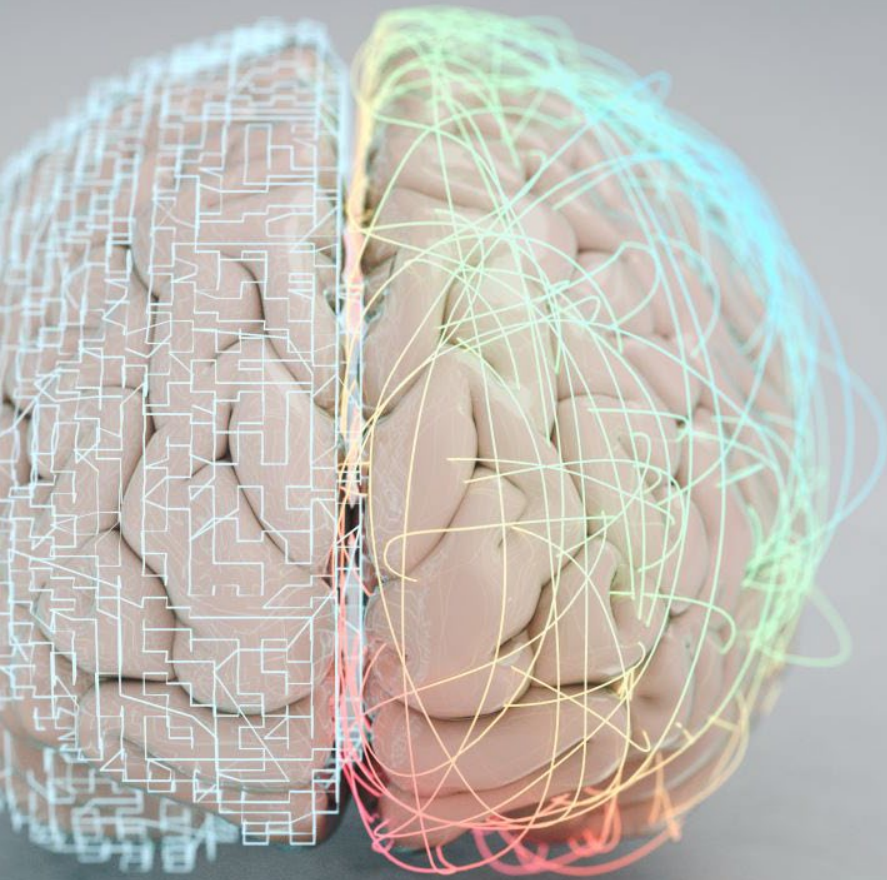
A Guide for Parents to
Support Their Child's Sensory
Development

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Objectives

- Understand what sensory processing is.
- Identify signs of sensory needs in children.
- Learn why children have sensory needs.
- Strategies to support children with sensory needs.





What is Sensory Processing?

- ▶ Sensory processing is how the brain receives and responds to sensory input from the environment.

What is Sensory Processing?

- ▶ 8 Sensory Systems:
 - Visual (sight)
 - Auditory (hearing)
 - Tactile (touch)
 - Olfactory (smell)
 - Gustatory (taste)
 - Vestibular (balance)
 - Proprioception (body awareness)
 - Interoception (internal signals)

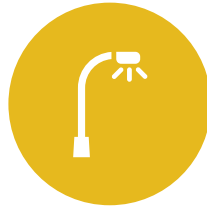
Why Do Some Students Have Sensory Needs?

- Neurodiversity: Children process sensory input differently (e.g., autism, ADHD).
- Over- or under-responsive: Hypersensitive or hyposensitive to stimuli.
- Developmental delays: Delays in sensory integration.
- Stress and anxiety increase sensitivity.

Needs



- AVOIDS CERTAIN TEXTURES (CLOTHING, FOOD).



- OVERWHELMED BY LOUD NOISES OR BRIGHT LIGHTS.



- SEEKS EXCESSIVE MOVEMENT (SPINNING, JUMPING).



- DIFFICULTY SITTING STILL OR FOCUSING.



- OVERREACTS OR UNDERREACTS TO PAIN, TEMPERATURE, OR TOUCH.



Understanding Sensory Thresholds

- ▶ Low Threshold (Hypersensitive):
- ▶ Children notice stimuli more easily and can become overwhelmed.
- ▶ High Threshold (Hyposensitive): Children need more intense stimuli to respond.
- ▶ Examples: Avoiding noise or seeking rough play.

Challenges



DIFFICULTY
CONCENTRATING IN
NOISY ENVIRONMENTS



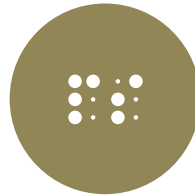
CHALLENGES WITH
HANDWRITING OR
USING TOOLS
(SCISSORS, PENCIL)



AVOIDING OR
STRUGGLING WITH
PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES
(RECESS, GYM CLASS)



DIFFICULTY WITH
TRANSITIONS BETWEEN
ACTIVITIES OR SPACES



TROUBLE TOLERATING
CERTAIN CLASSROOM
MATERIALS (CHAIRS,
LIGHTING)

How to Meet Sensory Needs at Home

1

Create a Sensory-Friendly Environment:

- Designate a quiet space for your child to decompress.
- Offer soft lighting and calming music.

2

Use Sensory Tools:

- Weighted blankets, fidget toys, noise-canceling headphones.
- Offer various textures through clothing or toys.

3

Develop a Routine:

- Predictable routines help children feel safe and grounded.
- Use visual schedules to help your child understand transitions.

How Schools Address Sensory Needs

Sensory Breaks: Short breaks that allow movement or quiet time to regulate.

Alternative Seating: Wobble stools, exercise balls, or standing desks.

Fidget Tools: Stress balls, putty, or other small, quiet manipulatives.

Sensory Rooms: Designated spaces for sensory exploration or calming activities.

Accommodations: Adjustments like noise-reducing headphones, special lighting, or seating away from distractions.

How to Work with Your Child's School

1

Collaborate with Teachers: Share what sensory strategies work at home.

2

IEP/504 Plans: Ensure sensory needs are documented in individualized plans.

3

Advocate for Sensory Tools: Request sensory supports within the classroom.

Strategies for Sensory-Seeking Children

Movement Breaks:
Jumping jacks,
stretching, or yoga.

Heavy Work Activities: Carrying groceries, pushing a heavy cart, or vacuuming.

Outdoor Play:
Encourage swinging,
climbing, and other
activities that involve
large motor skills.

Strategies for Sensory-Avoidant Children



CALMING STRATEGIES: DEEP PRESSURE (HUGS OR WEIGHTED BLANKETS), DIM LIGHTING, SOFT TEXTURES.



NOISE MANAGEMENT: USE EARPLUGS OR HEADPHONES IN LOUD ENVIRONMENTS.



GRADUAL EXPOSURE: SLOWLY INTRODUCE NEW TEXTURES, SOUNDS, OR SMELLS IN SMALL, MANAGEABLE INCREMENTS.

When to Seek Professional Help

If sensory challenges interfere with daily functioning.

Occupational Therapy: A professional can assess and create a sensory plan.

Behavioral Therapy: Helps children cope with anxiety or behavioral responses to sensory overload.

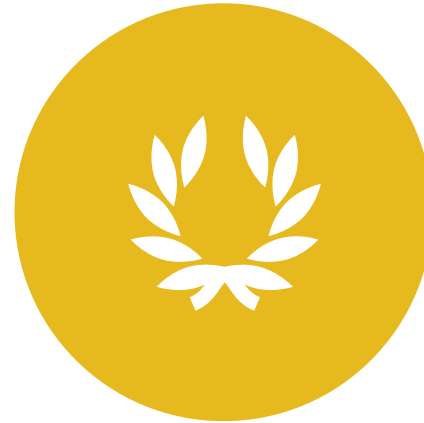
Conclusion

- **Key Takeaways:**
 - Every child processes sensory information differently.
 - Sensory needs can affect how children learn and behave.
 - You can create sensory-friendly environments at home and in school.
 - Collaborate with professionals and teachers to meet your child's sensory needs.

Questions and Discussion



PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT
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QUESTIONS.



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