

SENSORY PROCESSING

SENSORY PROCESSING, ALSO CALLED SENSORY INTEGRATION, IS THE WAY OUR NERVOUS SYSTEM RECEIVES INFORMATION FROM OUR SENSES, AND THEN ORGANIZES AND MAKE SENSE OF THAT CONTINUAL FLOW OF INFORMATION. THIS INFORMATION FLOW COMES FROM ALL THE SENSES AT THE SAME TIME, 24/7.

THE SYSTEMS



SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER (SPD)

WHAT IS IT? A NEUROLOGICAL "TRAFFIC JAM" WHERE THE BRAIN HAS TROUBLE RECEIVING AND RESPONDING TO INCOMING INFORMATION. IT IS A SPECTRUM, MEANING ONE SYSTEM OR MULTIPLE SYSTEMS COULD BE AFFECTED.

HOW MUCH A SYSTEM RESPONDS TO INFORMATION RANGES FROM...

↑ HYPERSENSITIVE — TO — HYPOSENSITIVE ↓

A system can be **OVER-RESPONSIVE** to incoming information causing a child to act **avoidant or defensive** because the system is overwhelmed. A small amount of sensory input can lead to a big reaction from a child.

A system can be **UNDER-RESPONSIVE** to incoming information causing a child to show **"seeking"** behavior. A larger amount of sensory input is needed in order to recognize the sensation or feel calm/organized.

WHEN ARE SENSORY PREFERENCES CONSIDERED A DISORDER?

We all have different preferences and dislikes for different sensations.

Example: one of your favorite foods may be a taste or texture someone else doesn't like.

Different sensory preferences are considered a **DISORDER** when an individual's life is significantly impacted by their difficulty in processing sensory information.

WHAT IS A SENSORY DIET? It is important to find what is just right for a child's individual body. We all have different needs! A **SENSORY DIET** consists of individually designed activities scheduled throughout the day to help a child organize their body systems, calm their bodies, reduce feelings of stress, and prepare them to engage in daily activities + tasks!

TALK TO YOUR THERAPIST IF YOU THINK A SENSORY PROGRAM COULD BE BENEFICIAL FOR YOUR CHILD!



SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER



THE GUSTATORY SYSTEM

WHAT IS IT?

OUR BODY'S SENSE OF TASTE THAT HELPS US RECOGNIZE SWEET, SALTY, SOUR, BITTER, AND UMAMI (SAVORY). INFORMATION FOR THE GUSTATORY SYSTEM ENTERS OUR BODY THROUGH THE TONGUE AND TASTE BUDS. THIS SENSE IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP US SAFE BY ALLOWING US TO DETECT THINGS THAT ARE INEDIBLE, SPOILED OR TOXIC. A FOOD'S TEXTURE, TEMPERATURE, AND SMELL (the tactile and olfactory systems) ALSO WORK WITH OUR SENSE OF TASTE TO HELP US IDENTIFY FOOD AND ITS TASTE.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

AVOIDANT/DEFENSIVE

(OVER-RESPONSIVE)

- PICKY EATER (only eats specific brands, anxious trying new food)
- MAY ONLY EAT FOOD AT ROOM TEMPERATURE
- ENJOYS BLAND FOOD
- RESISTANT TO BRUSHING TEETH
- MAY GAG OR CHOKER ON SPECIFIC FOODS
- EXTREME EMOTIONAL REACTIONS AT MEAL TIMES OR DENTIST VISITS

SEEKING

(UNDER-RESPONSIVE)

- LICKS, CHEWS, OR BITES NON-FOOD ITEMS
- PREFERS FOOD TOO HOT OR TOO COLD
- ENJOYS EXTREME FLAVORS (spicy, sour, sweet, etc.)
- MAY MAKE AN EXCESSIVE AMOUNT OF NOISE WITH THEIR MOUTHS (clicking, humming, buzzing, etc.)
- OVER-STUFF MOUTH WITH FOOD

WHAT CAN WE DO AT HOME?

GENERAL STRATEGIES

- ESTABLISH ROUTINES TO CREATE COMFORT BEFORE MEALTIME. (eating at same time/location, bring familiar utensils)
 - PARENTS/SIBLINGS ACT AS ROLE MODELS WHEN INTERACTING WITH FOOD.
- PRAISE GOOD BEHAVIOR! INCLUDING WHEN A CHILD SAYS "No thank you" TO A PIECE OF FOOD.
- SERVE FOOD AS EASY-TO-MANAGE (small, bite-sized pieces)
- ENCOURAGE PLAYING WITH FOOD.
- HAVE CHILDREN HELP WITH MEALTIME (preparation, setting table, cleaning-up, etc.)
- PROVIDE FLAVORFUL, CRUNCHY, CHEWY, OR STICKY SNACKS THROUGHOUT THE DAY.

CALMING

- CHEWY TUBE
- DEEP BREATHING TECHNIQUES
- SINGING OR HUMMING
- WATER BOTTLE WITH STRAW
- KAZOO OR WHISTLE
- DRIED FRUIT SNACK (raisins, mango, etc.)
- DRINK THICK LIQUIDS THROUGH STRAW (milkshake, pudding, smoothie, applesauce, etc.)
- CHEWING GUM (if safe and age-appropriate)
- BLOW BUBBLES (bubble wand, through a straw in bowl of water, balloons, etc.)
- BLOW COTTON BALL ACROSS TABLE

ALERTING

- VIBRATING TOOTHBRUSH/TOY (talk to your OT or ST about a zvibe)
- USE A MIRROR TO MAKE FUNNY FACES (open wide, puff cheeks, etc.)
- SOUR/SWEET SNACKS (grapefruit, orange wedges, lemonade, etc.)
- COLD SNACKS (ice chips, frozen grapes, etc.)
- SALTY SNACKS (pretzels, nuts, chips, etc.)
- CRUNCHY SNACKS (raw vegetables, toast, granola, etc.)

TALK TO YOUR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST OR SPEECH THERAPIST IF YOU THINK A FEEDING PROGRAM COULD BE BENEFICIAL FOR YOUR CHILD!



SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER THE AUDITORY SYSTEM

WHAT IS IT? HEARING IS THE PROCESS OF HOW THE ORGANS OF OUR EARS RECEIVE SOUNDS FROM OUR ENVIRONMENT. AUDITORY PROCESSING REFERS TO HOW OUR BRAIN UNDERSTANDS AND INTERPRETS THESE SOUNDS. THE AUDITORY SYSTEM IS IMPORTANT TO HELP US RESPOND APPROPRIATELY TO SOUNDS IN OUR ENVIRONMENT INCLUDING PROTECTIVE RESPONSES TO DANGEROUS SITUATIONS. IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT FOR DEVELOPING LISTENING, SOCIAL, AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

AVOIDANT

(OVER-RESPONSIVE)

- OVERWHELMED BY (OR AFRAID OF) COMMON, UNPREDICTABLE ENVIRONMENTAL SOUNDS
- SENSITIVE TO (OR AFRAID OF) LOUD/SUDDEN SOUNDS
- UNCOMMONLY SOFT/LOW VOLUME
- COVERS EARS OFTEN OR DUCKS HEAD TO BLOCK SOUND
- AVOIDS OR FLEES FROM NOISY/CROWDED ENVIRONMENT
- APPEARS DISTRACTED (FOCUSED ON NOISE AROUND THEM)

SEEKING

(UNDER-RESPONSIVE)

- ENJOYS LOUD CRASHING OR BANGING
- BACKGROUND NOISES ARE DISTRACTING
- UNCOMMONLY HIGH/LOUD VOLUME
- CONSTANTLY TALKING OR MAKING NOISE
- TALKS OUT-LOUD THROUGH STEPS OF TASK
- SEEMS TO IGNORE PEOPLE OFTEN
- ASKS OTHERS TO REPEAT THEMSELVES
- HAS TROUBLE WITH READING

WHAT CAN WE DO AT HOME?

- SING SONGS FOR DIRECTIONS, LEARNING, AND MEMORY
- THERAPEUTIC LISTENING PROGRAM (talk to your therapist)

AVOIDANT

- USE NOISE CANCELING HEADPHONES OR EAR-PLUGS IN LOUD ENVIRONMENTS
- HAVE A QUIET SPACE FOR YOUR CHILD TO GO TO
- WARN YOUR CHILD BEFORE LOUD EVENTS TAKE PLACE (like fireworks)
- USE SOFT, CALMING MUSIC FOR SELF-REGULATION
- PLAY WITH A RAIN STICK

SEEKING

- STAND NEAR YOUR CHILD/ PROVIDE VISUAL/TOUCH CUES WHEN SPEAKING TO THEM
- LISTEN TO MUSIC OR HAVE THEM LEARN A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT
- WHITE NOISE MACHINE, FAN, ETC. WHEN NEEDING TO FOCUS
- PLAY CLAPPING GAMES
- LISTENING GAMES (include direction-following)

TALK TO YOUR THERAPIST IF YOU THINK A SENSORY PROGRAM COULD BE BENEFICIAL FOR YOUR CHILD!

SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER



THE VISUAL SYSTEM

WHAT IS IT? VISUAL PROCESSING IS THE WAY OUR BRAIN INTERPRETS THE INFORMATION FROM OUR EYES TO HELP US UNDERSTAND WHAT WE SEE IN THE SPACE AROUND US. IT HELPS US NOTICE COLORS, GIVES US DEPTH PERCEPTION, TELLS US WHERE OBJECTS ARE IN OUR SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT, AND MORE!

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

AVOIDANT (OVER-RESPONSIVE)

- EASILY DISTRACTED BY THINGS AROUND THEM
- OVERWHELMED WITH BUSY ENVIRONMENT OR VISUAL FIELD (many objects/toys, colors, pictures, or people)
- WANTS TO WATCH ANY ACTIVITY
- COUNTS/WATCHES COLORED OR TEXTURED TILES ON FLOOR OR CEILING
- RUBS EYES
- COVERS EYES OR SQUINTS
- FREQUENT HEADACHES
- AVOIDS DIRECT EYE CONTACT
- DIFFICULTY READING

SEEKING (UNDER-RESPONSIVE)

- MAY NOT NOTICE SURROUNDINGS UNLESS OBJECTS/ DETAILS ARE POINTED OUT
- STARES AT A POINT FOR EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME
- STARES AT BRIGHT LIGHTS OR MOVING OBJECTS
- HAS TROUBLE MAINTAINING PLACE ON PAGE WHEN READING (skips words or loses their place)

WHAT CAN WE DO AT HOME?

AVOIDANT (OVER-RESPONSIVE)

- REDUCE CLUTTER IN ROOM/ON DESK
- SUNGLASSES FOR BRIGHT SPACES
- IMPORTANT INFORMATION IN A BOLD COLOR
- PRIVACY DIVIDER FOR WORKING IN A BUSY ROOM
- RELAX IN A DARK/DIMLY LIT ROOM WITH BLACK LIGHTS OR NIGHTLIGHT
- FEWER PICTURES/POSTERS ON BEDROOM WALLS (OR IN WORK/STUDY SPACES)
- REQUEST EYE CONTACT FOR ATTENTION TO IMPORTANT INFORMATION

SEEKING (UNDER-RESPONSIVE)

*REQUIRES MORE VISUAL STIMULATION TO
STAY ALERT AND PARTICIPATE*

- BRIGHT PAPER UNDER WORK TO PROMOTE ATTENTION
- VISUAL STICKER CHARTS FOR MOTIVATION
- WRITING LEARNING MATERIALS IN BOLD FONT OR IN BRIGHT, LARGE LETTERS
- GLITTER "CALM DOWN" JAR
- LAMP OVER WORK/STUDY SPACE
- LIGHTS THAT CHANGE COLORS
- KALEIDOSCOPE

TALK TO YOUR THERAPIST IF YOU THINK A SENSORY
PROGRAM COULD BE BENEFICIAL FOR YOUR CHILD!



SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER



THE OLFACTORY SYSTEM

WHAT IS IT? THE OLFACTORY SYSTEM IS THE WAY OUR BRAIN INTERPRETS OUR SENSE OF SMELL. INSIDE OUR NOSE ARE SENSORY RECEPTORS THAT TAKE SMELLS FROM OUR ENVIRONMENT AND SEND THE INFORMATION TO OUR BRAIN TO TELL US WHAT KIND OF SMELL IT IS.

IS IT A STRONG SMELL?



IS IT A GOOD SMELL?

IS IT A DANGEROUS SMELL?

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

AVOIDANT

(OVER-RESPONSIVE)

- NOTICE AND BECOME DISTRACTED BY SMELLS OTHER PEOPLE DON'T TYPICALLY NOTICE (cleaners, lotions, perfumes, detergent, soaps, etc.)
- GAGS WITH CERTAIN SMELLS OR WHEN EATING CERTAIN FOODS
- AVOIDS FAMILIAR FOOD BECAUSE OF SMELL
- AVOIDS BEING CLOSE TO OR HUGGING PEOPLE
- DEMONSTRATES SENSITIVITIES TO RESTAURANTS OR FOOD COURTS/CAFETERIAS

SEEKING

(UNDER-RESPONSIVE)

- ENJOYS/PREFERS OFF-TASTING FOOD
- DOESN'T NOTICE STRONG SMELLS
- HAS TROUBLE IDENTIFYING SAFE VS. DANGEROUS SMELLS (dangerous smells include rotten food or chemicals)
- SMELLS OBJECTS/PEOPLE FREQUENTLY
- ENJOYS "ODD" SCENTS
- HAS TROUBLE IDENTIFYING SMELLS OF FOOD

WHAT CAN WE DO AT HOME?

ALERTING SCENTS: CITRUS + PEPPERMINT

CALMING SCENTS: LAVENDER + ROSE

AVOIDANT

- AVOID OFFENSIVE FRAGRANCES (candles, perfume, cleaning sprays/supplies, etc.)
- WHEN AROUND NON-PREFERRED SMELLS, BRING OBJECT WITH PREFERRED SCENT OR OIL
- TAKE A BREAK OUTSIDE! • COOKING WITH KIDS!

SEEKING

- ADD ESSENTIAL OILS OR COOKING SPICES TO PLAYDOUGH • LAVENDER PILLOWS • COOKING!
- GUESS THE SMELL GAME (use food or cotton balls with essential oils) *INCREASE CHALLENGE WITH BLINDFOLD* • SCENTED RICE PLAY
- AROMATHERAPY (smelling essential oils)
- PROVIDE WITH PREFERRED STRONG SMELLING FOODS (ex: oranges) • SCENTED STUFFED ANIMALS/TOYS
- SCENTED MARKERS OR FINGER PAINTING

TALK TO YOUR THERAPIST IF YOU THINK A SENSORY PROGRAM COULD BE BENEFICIAL FOR YOUR CHILD!



SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER



THE TACTILE SYSTEM

WHAT IS IT? THE TACTILE SYSTEM REFERS TO THE WAY OUR BRAIN UNDERSTANDS TOUCH INFORMATION THROUGH THE SKIN INCLUDING TEXTURE, PRESSURE, TEMPERATURE, AND VIBRATION. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR LETTING US KNOW WHAT WE ARE TOUCHING AND HOW IT FEELS SO THAT WE CAN APPROPRIATELY INTERACT WITH OUR ENVIRONMENT AND KEEP OURSELVES SAFE!

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

AVOIDANT (OVER-RESPONSIVE)

- CLOTHING TAGS ARE BOTHERSOME
- AVOID HAVING MESSY HANDS OR FACE
- AVOID CERTAIN FOOD AT MEALTIMES
- RESISTS CUDDLING
- LOW PAIN TOLERANCE
- FIND SIMPLE TOUCH EXPERIENCES UNPLEASANT OR PAINFUL
- HAS TROUBLE ENGAGING IN SOME HYGIENE TASKS (bathing, brushing teeth, washing hands, etc.)

SEEKING (UNDER-RESPONSIVE)

- TOUCHES EVERYTHING (walls, objects, people, maybe even something dangerous)
- SEEK OUT SPECIFIC TEXTURES
- HIGH PAIN TOLERANCE
- DOES NOT NOTICE MESSY HANDS/FACE
- PREFERS TIGHT CLOTHING
- FIDGETS WITH OBJECTS (constantly rubbing, squeezing, or turning)
- MAY ENGAGE IN SELF-HARMING BEHAVIORS (biting, pinching, or banging head)

WHAT CAN WE DO AT HOME?

IN TACTILE EXPLORATION AND PLAY FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE OVER-RESPONSIVE, BE SURE TO WATCH YOUR CHILD FOR THEIR REACTION AND STOP WHEN THEY BECOME UNCOMFORTABLE

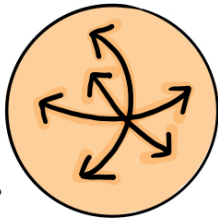
- HAVE YOUR CHILD DESCRIBE HOW TEXTURES FEEL (soft, hard, bumpy, squishy, wet, etc.)
- WATER PLAY OR SWIMMING (add sponges, cups, pitchers, and syringes to promote exploration)
- SENSORY BINS: BUCKETS FILLED WITH RICE, BEANS, SAND, WATER BEADS, PEAS, PASTA, ETC.
- FINGER PAINT (for more tactile exploration, paint with whole body before bath time!)
- ITEMS WITH DIFFERENT TEXTURES (including stuffed animals) • FIDGET/VIBRATING TOYS
- COOKING OR PLAYING WITH FOOD • GET DIRTY! (PLAY IN THE MUD OR RAIN) • TOUCH AND FEEL BOOK

FOR AVOIDANT KIDS: • REMOVE TAGS FROM CLOTHING • AVOID ROUGH/ITCHY CLOTHING, TOWELS OR SHEETS
• ASK BEFORE GIVING A HUG (AND RESPECT THEIR ANSWER) • PROVIDE A CALM-DOWN SPACE
• PROVIDE NEW FOOD IN A PREFERRED TEXTURE (mashed, crunchy, etc.)

TALK TO YOUR THERAPIST IF YOU THINK A SENSORY PROGRAM COULD BE BENEFICIAL FOR YOUR CHILD!



SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER



THE VESTIBULAR SYSTEM

WHAT IS IT? THE ORGANS INSIDE OUR EARS TELL OUR BRAIN INFORMATION ABOUT HOW OUR BODY IS RESPONDING TO GRAVITY. THE VESTIBULAR SYSTEM CAN RECOGNIZE THE PULL OF GRAVITY, OUR HEAD POSITION, BODY SPEED, THE DIRECTION WE ARE FACING, AND MORE. THIS SYSTEM HELPS US MAINTAIN BALANCE AND POSTURE, SEE CLEARLY AS WE MOVE, AND ADJUST OUR MUSCLES.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

AVOIDANT (OVER-RESPONSIVE)

- MOVING SLOWLY OR CAUTIOUSLY
- FREQUENT MOTION SICKNESS/DIZZINESS
- PREFERENCE FOR SEDENTARY ACTIVITIES
- DISLIKES/FEARS ACTIVITIES REQUIRING FEET TO LEAVE THE GROUND (i.e. swings, slides, bikes, climbing, etc.)
- HOLDS HEAD UP WITH HANDS

SEEKING (UNDER-RESPONSIVE)

- CLUMSINESS OR FREQUENT FALLING
- SEEKS/CRAVES ACTIVITIES REQUIRING FEET TO LEAVE THE GROUND (i.e. swings, slides, bikes, climbing, etc.)
- FREQUENT TWIRLING, SPINNING, HEAD TILTING, ETC.
- CONSTANTLY ON-THE-GO

WHAT CAN WE DO AT HOME?

AVOIDANT

For Vestibular avoiders, help your child feel grounded with deep proprioceptive input before the movement activities listed below. Start with small movements, listen to your child, and watch their reactions. Stop as soon as your child becomes uncomfortable.

SEEKING

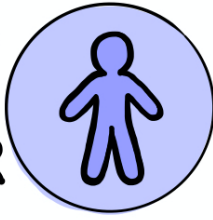
For Vestibular seekers, you can meet your child's needs with the movement activities listed below. After these strategies, have your child do a "heavy work" activity such as animal walks (bear/crab walk, etc.) or pushing/pulling heavy objects.

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| • SOMERSAULTS | • BALANCE BEAM | • SWINGING (back and forth is calming, spinning is alerting) |
| • LOG ROLLING | • HANGING UPSIDEDOWN | • WIGGLE CUSHION (seated activity) |
| • JUMPING ROPE | • MOVEMENT BREAKS | • FOOTREST (seated activities) |
| • YOGA POSES | • BOUNCING ON A BALL | • ANIMAL WALKS (change in head position: bear walk, donkey kicks, inchworm, etc.) |
| • WINDMILLS | • TWIST AND PASS A BALL BACK-TO-BACK | |

TALK TO YOUR THERAPIST IF YOU THINK A SENSORY PROGRAM COULD BE BENEFICIAL FOR YOUR CHILD!



SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER



THE PROPRIOCEPTION SYSTEM

WHAT IS IT?

OUR BODY'S ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE AND UNDERSTAND WHERE IT IS IN SPACE WITHOUT USING OUR EYES. INFORMATION FOR THE PROPRIOCEPTIVE SENSE ENTERS OUR BODY THROUGH OUR MUSCLES AND JOINTS. WITH THIS INFORMATION, OUR BRAIN DECIDES HOW OUR BODY SHOULD RESPOND AND MAKE THE NEXT MOVEMENT.

EXAMPLE: when you reach for something your brain, knows where your arm is and what it is doing.

OH! MY ARM IS STRETCHED OUT AND NOT BY MY SIDE.



I NEED TO PUSH/PULL HARDER TO OPEN THE DOOR!

Example: when you are trying to open a door, your brain can tell how you need to open the door.

Example: when you are running or walking, your brain can tell how you are moving in your environment.

I'M MOVING TOO FAST FOR THIS NARROW HALLWAY!



WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

SEEKING

KIDS ARE MOST OFTEN PROPRIOCEPTIVE SEEKING, MEANING THEIR BODIES ARE UNDER-RESPONSIVE AND REQUIRE A LARGE AMOUNT OF INPUT TO BECOME AWARE OF WHERE THEIR BODY IS IN SPACE OR HOW THEIR BODY INTERACTS WITH THE SPACE AROUND THEM.

- SLOW-MOVING
- LOW MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE IN MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES
- CLUMSINESS OR POOR BODY AWARENESS (runs into objects, walls, or people)
- SEEM TO HAVE A HIGH PAIN TOLERANCE
- CRASHES INTO THINGS
- UNCOORDINATED
- LEANS HEAVILY ON PEOPLE/OBJECTS
- CRAVES BIG, TIGHT HUGS
- PUSHES/PULLS WITH EXTREME FORCE
- SEEMS OUT-OF-CONTROL
- PREFERS TIGHT CLOTHING
- WALKS LOUDLY OR STOMPS

WHAT CAN WE DO AT HOME?

HERE ARE SOME STRATEGIES TO HELP TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH DAILY ACTIVITIES. "HEAVY WORK" IS A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE ACTIVITIES THAT REQUIRE SIGNIFICANT RESISTANCE AND PROVIDE A LOT OF INPUT TO MUSCLES AND JOINTS. THESE ACTIVITIES ARE UNIVERSALLY GREAT STRATEGIES FOR KEEPING THE PROPRIOCEPTIVE SYSTEM CALM, HAPPY, AND ALERT!

- ANIMAL MOVEMENTS (bear/crab walk, donkey kicks, duck waddle, inchworm crawl, kangaroo/frog jump, etc.)
- WEIGHTED BLANKET (weighted lap pad for seated activities)
- JUMPING ON A TRAMPOLINE
- THICK PUTTY (theraputty, silly putty, playdough, etc.)
- YOGA STRETCHES
- "STEAM ROLLS" (deep pressure with therapy ball or pillow)
- CARRY SOMETHING HEAVY
- WEIGHTED VEST OR COMPRESSION VEST
- PUSH OR PULL SOMETHING HEAVY
- ANKLE/WRIST WEIGHTS (start small with 1/2 pound)
- BEAR HUGS
- SPORTS

PLEASE ASK YOUR OT FOR ADDITIONAL IDEAS SPECIFIC FOR YOUR CHILD AND HOW TO SAFELY IMPLEMENT THESE STRATEGIES

TALK TO YOUR THERAPIST IF YOU THINK A SENSORY PROGRAM COULD BE BENEFICIAL FOR YOUR CHILD!



SENSORY PROCESSING



THE INTEROCEPTION SYSTEM

WHAT IS IT? INTEROCEPTION IS OUR BODY'S ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE AND UNDERSTAND WHAT IS GOING ON INSIDE OF OUR BODY. INTEROCEPTION SENSATIONS INCLUDE HUNGRY/FULL, THIRSTY, ITCHY, PAIN, FEELING TIRED/ENERGIZED, HOT/COLD, EMOTIONS, SICK, AND BOWEL/BLADDER URGES. THESE SENSATIONS ARE GENERALLY SMALLER THAN OUR OTHER SENSES, BUT THEY FLUCTUATE UP AND DOWN DEPENDING ON WHAT OUR BODY NEEDS. THE INTEROCEPTION SYSTEM AFFECTS SELF-AWARENESS, PROBLEM-SOLVING, PERSPECTIVE TAKING, SOCIAL UNDERSTANDING, FLEXIBLE THINKING, EMOTIONAL RECOGNITION/REGULATION, AND INTUITION.

EXAMPLE:

Is it...
HUNGER?
ANXIETY?
NAUSEA?

TUMMY PAIN.

DO I NEED TO POTTY?
If someone hasn't learned the difference between these sensations, they can be hard to tell apart.



INFORMATION IS RECEIVED THROUGH SENSORY RECEPTORS ALL OVER OUR BODY IN PLACES AS OUR MUSCLES, ORGANS, BONES, JOINTS, AND MORE. THE INFORMATION IS SENT TO A PART OF OUR BRAIN THAT IS IN CHARGE OF ANY CHANGES TO OUR INTERNAL BODY AND EMOTIONS. THE BRAIN USES THAT INFORMATION TO LET US KNOW WHAT WE NEED IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THE BALANCE BETWEEN OUR BODY'S SYSTEMS.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

AVOIDANT

(OVER-RESPONSIVE)

- LOW PAIN TOLERANCE
- BIG REACTIONS TO HUNGER OR NEED TO POTTY
- DIFFICULTY WITH FOCUSING AND ATTENTION
- FREQUENTLY NAUSEOUS
- FREQUENT USE OF BATHROOM (can't be explained by another medical condition)

SEEKING

(UNDER-RESPONSIVE)

- HIGH PAIN TOLERANCE
- LATE POTTY TRAINING
- ACCIDENTS AND/OR CONSTIPATION
- DOESN'T FEEL HUNGRY
- NOT FEELING FULL AFTER EATING
- DECREASED AWARENESS OF TEMPERATURE

WHAT CAN WE DO AT HOME?

- **MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES:** coloring, labeling senses out-loud (taste, smell, touch, hear, see, think. example: right now I am noticing the sounds of people talking. What do you notice?), identifying emotions (verbally labeling child's emotions. example: "I see you are crying, you must be feeling _____. [sad/angry/afraid/etc.]) apply gentle pressure to abdomen to feel if bladder is full.
- **BODY SCAN:** www.mindful.org/body-scan-kids/ [try before bedtime!]
- **CALM DOWN JAR** (relate to mindfulness: "thoughts and feelings are just like the glitter-when we are upset, they spin all over the place inside our head. We need them all to settle before we can calm down.")
- **YOGA • MEDITATION • BREATHING EXERCISES** (FLOWER AND CANDLE BREATHING: smell a flower [breathe in through nose] to count of 3 blow out candle [out through mouth] to count of 3)
- **BODY CHECK ACTIVITIES:** hes-extraordinary.com/interoception-body-check-chart

CONSIDER INTERNAL ISSUES AS A CAUSE OF BEHAVIOR: ask yourself how long it has been since your child ate? drank? Are they dressed appropriately for weather? Etc. They might not understand their feelings.

TALK TO YOUR THERAPIST IF YOU THINK A SENSORY PROGRAM COULD BE BENEFICIAL FOR YOUR CHILD!

