

Sensory Considerations in Children

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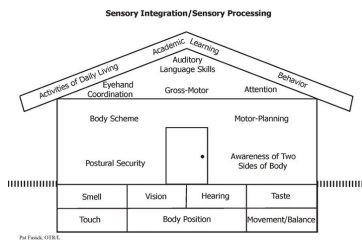
Occupational Therapy in schools

- Occupational therapy is a person-centred health profession, where the primary focus is enabling people to participate fully as possible in their everyday activities.
- When working with children, occupational therapists help children develop skills with activities in the areas of school, fine motor, writing, play and appropriate self-care.
- Occupational therapists engage children in activities that are designed to regulate their sensory input, to make them feel more comfortable, secure, focused and to engage in classroom.

What is Sensory Processing?

“The neurological process that organises sensation from one’s own body and from the environment and makes it possible to **use the body effectively** within the environment”

– Jane Ayres, 1972



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_lu8dr9oY

Over and Under Responsive

OVER-RESPONSIVE	UNDER-RESPONSIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only LITTLE input for a BIG response • Glass is small and it only takes a few drops of water to overflow. • Child can get upset or try to avoid these situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A BIG input only gets a LITTLE response • Glass is large and it can be continuously filled with water but it never feels full. • Child seeks out more of these sensations, or doesn't notice them

Auditory / Sound

OVER-RESPONSIVE	UNDER-RESPONSIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distracted by sounds not noticed by others • Upset by certain sounds – lawn mower, school siren, hair dryer • Covers ears with hands or pulls clothing over ears 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't respond when spoken to, "Dreamy" • Seek loud noises & environments • May make loud inappropriate noises when in a quiet place • Appears oblivious to certain sounds

Strategies

- Provide calming music
- White noise – can love it or hate it!
- Allow self-talk/sing/ humming
- Quiet corner
 - Cubby/tent
 - Table with sheet over it
 - Large box
 - Bean bag
 - Filled cushions, pillows, blankets
 - Take sensory toys inside
- Preparation

Taste & Smell

OVER-RESPONSIVE	UNDER-RESPONSIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fussy eater – “white food” (texture) Gags easily Notices/bothered by smells 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not notice odours that bother others Excessively smells people/objects Puts too much food in their mouth, drools Does not notice food on their face

Strategies

- Different tastes elicit different reactions
- Allow them to play with the food with utensils first rather than putting it straight in their mouths
- Once you find a particularly successful food, try introducing similar foods
- Try providing distractions while they are eating
- Pay attention to textures!
- Introduce small amount of new food and/or dip into it first
- For older children let them cut their food

Vision

OVER-RESPONSIVE	UNDER-RESPONSIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easily distracted by visual stimulus (e.g., classroom, shopping mall) Sensitive to bright light - looks away from light or covers eyes Prefers to be in the dark Avoids eye contact Difficulty finding objects in a cluttered environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lots of “looking” behaviour – looking at lines, spinning wheels, shining objects Engages in self-stimulatory eye movements (flapping hands in front of eyes, sprinkling sand...) Loves to switch lights on and off repeatedly Presses eye with fingers to watch shapes and colours

Strategies

- Provide calming visual input – sand-timer, lava/ bubble lamp, snow globe, fairy lights, kaleidoscope, glitter wand
- Different workstations – “concentration station”, under desk, in quiet and dark corner
- Maintain order and organisation to lessen visual distraction
- Avoid fluorescent lights
- Respect colour preferences in clothing, objects and interior decoration

Tactile / Touch

OVER-RESPONSIVE	UNDER-RESPONSIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over-reacts to light or unexpected touch Has trouble standing in lines or being bumped or being in a crowd Dislikes hair being brushed, cut and nails being cut Dislikes having bare feet especially on grass or sand Dislikes new or stiff clothing, labels, certain fabrics Bothered by tags, socks, shoes “Wipes off” kisses Doesn't like hands getting dirty - avoiding messy activity, sticky food, finger paint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always touching other people and objects Doesn't notice or respond to touch on arm High pain threshold Doesn't notice dirty hands, face, crooked clothes Seeks out messy play

Strategies

- Fidget toys – squishy balls, elastic bands, paper clips, wikki stix, pipe cleaners
- Firm touch/deep pressure - lap bag, wrap in a blanket, “Sandwich”
- Vibration – wiggle pens, massagers, vibrating cushions
- Plasticine – mould it, draw/write in it
- Sensory stations – moon sand, noodle box, rice, corn, shaving cream, water sensory bin with floating and sinking objects (e.g., sponges, toys)
- Chewing – chewable tube on the end of a pencil, “Chewelry”, special chew toy
- Sucking – wide straws, twisty straws
- Blowing – bubbles, cotton balls, musical instruments, balloons

Vestibular / Movement & Balance

OVER-RESPONSIVE	UNDER-RESPONSIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dislikes playground equipment e.g. swings, slides, climbing Dislikes spinning, swinging or hanging upside down Distressed when travelling in car/transport Avoids taking risks Afraid of feet leaving the ground, head being tipped backwards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks constant movement, cannot sit still Craves intense movement e.g. fast, high, spinning "Thrill seeker" -bumps, shakes head climbs on tall equipment Loves sitting and lying in all types of body postures

Strategies

- Need to experience very gentle and safe movement - be guided by the child's reactions!
- Movements when sitting/lying down rather than standing up
- Gentle activity while being held by a parent
- Trampoline-Gentle bouncing on a trampoline while lying /sitting
- Swinging on a very low swing
- Use slides, swings and monkey bars
- Working in different positions (Kneeling, standing, lying on the floor)
- Wiggle cushion
- Imitate different animal walks
- Dance to songs with instructions like The Hokey Pokey
- Jumping Jacks
- Movement breaks (e.g., have a break by helping around the house, bringing mail in, throwing the trash/ taking bins out/in)

Proprioception / Body Position

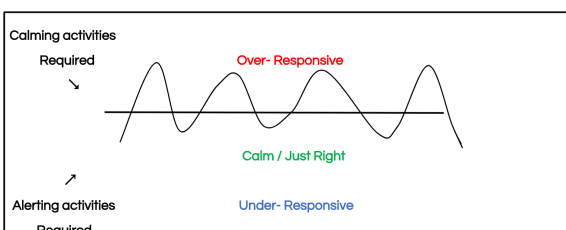
OVER-RESPONSIVE	UNDER-RESPONSIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May dislike firm touch, and excessive movement Tends to avoid putting weight through arms and hands Difficulty monitoring amount of strength or force to use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks out jumping, crashing, bumping movements Loves to be hugged tightly, wrapped up, snuggle in small places Heavy handed/heavy footed Presses heavily/lightly when writing Enjoys vibration and mouthing non-food items Appears to enjoy bumping into things, falling onto things. Unintentionally rough with other children

Strategies

- Weighted items
- Snuggling in a beanbag/ wrapped in blanket
- Hand held massager for deep vibration
- Push-ups (chair/wall) and jumping jacks
- "Heavy work" e.g., carrying books/shopping bags, dig in the garden, hanging clothes, washing the car
- Jumping on a trampoline
- Stress ball to squeeze
- Playground equipment

Self Regulation

"In the simplest terms, self-regulation can be defined as the ability to stay calmly focused and alert" – Dr. Stuart Shanker



The End

Thank you for listening!

Resources / Websites

- **Websites for more information on sensory processing:**
 - Pathways - <https://pathways.org/>
 - www.asensorylife.com
- **Websites for sensory items/ideas:**
 - Skill Builders - <http://www.skillbuilders.com.au/>
 - <http://laughingkidslearn.com/sensory-play/>
 - <http://www.ot-mom-learning-activities.com/sensory-integration-activities.html>
 - <http://therapiststreetforkids.com/Sensory.html>