

BEHAVIOR

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SENSORY INTEGRATION

Sarah Long, University of Utah School of Occupational Therapy, 2010.

What is Sensory Integration and Processing?

Sensory integration is the neurological process that organizes sensation from one's own body and the environment and makes it possible to use the body effectively within the environment (Ayres, 1988). Sensory processing is the brain receiving, interpreting, and organizing input from all of the active senses at any given moment.

What are your seven senses?

Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, detecting your own movement (Vestibular), and knowing where your body is in space (Proprioception).

What sensory systems do we use every day, all the time?

Integration of the seven senses is necessary for learning, self regulation, motor skills, social skills, and self-care. Most people unconsciously learn to integrate their senses, but people with disabilities often struggle in this area and interpret the information from their senses either 1) too high and overwhelming (hypersensitive), or 2) too low and under arousing (hyposensitive).

Being over or under sensitive on a regular basis results in common behavior problems such as: disruptive behaviors (yelling, screaming, crying); self abuse or self-stimulatory behaviors (head banging, biting self, chewing fingernails, hand flapping, tapping feet); poor boundaries with others (invading personal space, giving unwanted hugs, kisses, or touches); isolation; repetitive obsessive behaviors (rumination); difficulty calming self; and poor motor skills.

Please see the back of this page for ideas on how to engage in activities that can effectively stimulate and strengthen your seven senses.

Different things work for different people, so try them all, varying activities over time.

“Just as a child needs healthy foods to grow and develop, he or she needs healthy levels of sensory input to learn, grow, and develop.”

~ Krisanne Lewis, Occupational Therapist at Spectrum Academy.

Activities that can help integrate the 7 senses:

					These two work together.	
Seeing	Hearing	Smelling	Tasting	Touching	Vestibular Equilibrium system that detects and registers movement and gravity.	Proprioception Information from our muscles and joints about where our body parts are in space.
						
<p>Look into a person's eyes</p> <p>Watch fish tank</p> <p>Watch a lava lamp</p> <p>Look at the stars at night</p> <p>Look into the mirror</p> <p>Look through a kaleidoscope</p> <p>Study a painting or photo with your eyes</p> <p>Read books</p> <p>Draw your name in the air with your eyes</p>	<p>Audio recordings of family, friends, or self.</p> <p>Music</p> <p>Books on tape</p> <p>Birds chirping</p> <p>Waterfall</p> <p>Nature sounds</p> <p>White noise</p> <p>Rhythms</p> <p>Humming</p> <p>Singing</p>	<p>Scented markers</p> <p>Smell flowers</p> <p>Cooking activities</p> <p>Candles</p> <p>Lotions</p> <p>Herbs</p> <p>Smell food</p> <p>Smell oils</p> <p>Smell nature</p>	<p>Taste different textures & flavors:</p> <p>Ice</p> <p>Gum</p> <p>Mints</p> <p>Ice cream</p> <p>Popsicles</p> <p>Seasonings & herbs</p> <p>Jello</p> <p>Hard candy</p> <p>Fruit</p> <p>Nuts</p> <p>Take time to taste your water</p> <p>Take time to taste your food when eating, try to detect all the flavors before swallowing</p>	<p>Feel different textures:</p> <p>Finger paint</p> <p>Clay</p> <p>Jello</p> <p>Play dough</p> <p>Goop!</p> <p>Velcro</p> <p>Pet animals</p> <p>Lotion</p> <p>Sand</p> <p>Wiggle pens</p> <p>Sandbox or playing in boxes filled with beans or rice</p> <p>Hugs</p> <p>Water play or warm bath</p> <p>Massage</p>	<p>Swim</p> <p>Dance to music</p> <p>Swing</p> <p>Sit on a seat cushion</p> <p>Ride bike</p> <p>Tug-of-war with a rolled up towel</p> <p>Push a heavy object</p> <p>Balance</p> 	<p>Hula hoop</p> <p>Jump on trampoline</p> <p>Obstacle courses</p> <p>Jump rope</p> <p>High fives or patty-cake</p> <p>Couples dancing</p> <p>Martial Arts</p> <p>Gymnastics</p> <p>Yoga</p>

Tip: Give Choices! Give Control! Enrich their Environment!