

The purpose of this sensory processing disorder checklist is to help parents and professionals who interact with children become educated about particular signs of sensory processing dysfunction.

What we need to be concerned with is **which** symptoms your child shows, **which category** they are having difficulty with, **how much it interferes** with their or other's lives **and what kind of impact it is having on their level of functioning**. They may have a lot in one category and none in another or some in all categories. This will help target diagnosis and treatment.

*-Sensory Processing Disorder Resource Center*

## **Sensory Processing Disorder Checklist**

### **Signs Of Tactile Dysfunction:**

#### **Hypersensitivity to Touch (Tactile Defensiveness)**

\_\_\_ becomes fearful, anxious or aggressive with light or unexpected touch

\_\_\_ appears fearful of, or avoids standing in close proximity to other people or peers (especially in lines)

\_\_\_ becomes frightened when touched from behind or by someone/something they cannot see (such as under a blanket)

\_\_\_ complains about having hair brushed; may be very picky about using a particular brush

\_\_\_ avoids group situations for fear of the unexpected touch

\_\_\_ resists friendly or affectionate touch from anyone besides parents or siblings (and sometimes them too!)

\_\_\_ dislikes kisses, will "wipe off" place where kissed

\_\_\_ prefers hugs

\_\_\_ may overreact to minor cuts, scrapes, and or bug bites

\_\_\_ avoids touching certain textures of material (blankets, rugs, stuffed animals)

\_\_\_ refuses to wear new or stiff clothes, clothes with rough textures, turtlenecks, jeans, hats, or belts, etc.

\_\_\_ avoids using hands for play

\_\_\_ avoids/dislikes/aversive to "messy play", i.e., sand, mud, water, glue, glitter, playdoh, slime, shaving cream/funny foam etc.

\_\_\_ will be distressed by dirty hands and want to wipe or wash them frequently

\_\_\_ excessively ticklish

\_\_\_ distressed by seams in socks and may refuse to wear them

\_\_\_ distressed by clothes rubbing on skin; may want to wear shorts and short sleeves year round

\_\_\_ may want to wear long sleeve shirts and long pants year round to avoid having skin exposed

\_\_\_ distressed about having face washed

\_\_\_ distressed about having hair, toenails, or fingernails cut

\_\_\_ is a picky eater, only eating certain tastes and textures; mixed textures tend to be avoided as well as hot or cold foods; resists trying new foods

\_\_\_ may refuse to walk barefoot on grass or sand

\_\_\_ may walk on toes only

### **Hyposensitivity to Touch (Under-Responsive):**

\_\_\_ may crave touch, needs to touch everything and everyone

\_\_\_ is not aware of being touched/bumped unless done with extreme force or intensity

\_\_\_ is not bothered by injuries, like cuts and bruises, and shows no distress with shots (may even say they love getting shots!)

\_\_\_ may not be aware that hands or face are dirty or feel his/her nose running

\_\_\_ may be self-abusive; pinching, biting, or banging his own head

\_\_\_ mouths objects excessively

\_\_\_ frequently hurts other children or pets while playing

\_\_\_ repeatedly touches surfaces or objects that are soothing (i.e., blanket)

\_\_\_ seeks out surfaces and textures that provide strong tactile feedback

\_\_\_ thoroughly enjoys and seeks out messy play

\_\_\_ has a preference and craving for excessively spicy, sweet, sour, or salty foods

**Vestibular Sense:** input from the inner ear about equilibrium, gravitational changes, movement experiences, and position in space.

### **Signs of Vestibular Dysfunction:**

#### **Hypersensitivity to Movement (Over-Responsive):**

\_\_\_ avoids/dislikes playground equipment; i.e., swings, ladders, slides, or merry-go-rounds

\_\_\_ prefers sedentary tasks, moves slowly and cautiously, avoids taking risks, and may appear "wimpy"

\_\_\_ avoids/dislikes elevators and escalators; may prefer sitting while they are on them or, actually get motion sickness from them

\_\_\_ may physically cling to an adult they trust

\_\_\_ may appear terrified of falling even when there is no real risk of it

\_\_\_ afraid of heights, even the height of a curb or step

\_\_\_ fearful of feet leaving the ground

\_\_\_ fearful of going up or down stairs or walking on uneven surfaces

\_\_\_ afraid of being tipped upside down, sideways or backwards

\_\_\_ startles if someone else moves them; i.e., pushing his/her chair closer to the table

\_\_\_ may be fearful of, and have difficulty riding a bike, jumping, hopping, or balancing on one foot (especially if eyes are closed)

\_\_\_ loses balance easily and may appear clumsy

\_\_\_ fearful of activities which require good balance

\_\_\_ avoids rapid or rotating movements

#### **Hyposensitivity to Movement (Under-Responsive):**

\_\_\_ in constant motion, can't seem to sit still

\_\_\_ craves fast, spinning, and/or intense movement experiences

- \_\_\_ loves being tossed in the air
- \_\_\_ could spin for hours and never appear to be dizzy
- \_\_\_ loves the fast, intense, and/or scary rides at amusement parks
- \_\_\_ always jumping on furniture, trampolines, spinning in a swivel chair, or getting into upside down positions
- \_\_\_ loves to swing as high as possible and for long periods of time
- \_\_\_ is a "thrill-seeker"; dangerous at times
- \_\_\_ always running, jumping, hopping etc. instead of walking
- \_\_\_ rocks body, shakes leg, or head while sitting
- \_\_\_ likes sudden or quick movements, such as, going over a big bump in the car or on a bike

**Proprioceptive Sense:** input from the muscles and joints about body position, weight, pressure, stretch, movement, and changes in position in space.

### **Signs of Proprioceptive Dysfunction:**

#### **Sensory Seeking Behaviors:**

- \_\_\_ seeks out jumping, bumping, and crashing activities
- \_\_\_ stomps feet when walking
- \_\_\_ kicks his/her feet on floor or chair while sitting at desk/table
- \_\_\_ bites or sucks on fingers and/or frequently cracks his/her knuckles
- \_\_\_ prefers clothes (and belts, hoods, shoelaces) to be as tight as possible
- \_\_\_ loves/seeks out "squishing" activities
- \_\_\_ enjoys bear hugs
- \_\_\_ excessive banging on/with toys and objects
- \_\_\_ loves "roughhousing" and tackling/wrestling games

- frequently falls on floor intentionally
- would jump on a trampoline for hours on end
- grinds his/her teeth throughout the day
- loves pushing/pulling/dragging objects
- loves jumping off furniture or from high places
- frequently hits, bumps or pushes other children
- chews on pens, straws, shirt sleeves etc.

**Difficulty with "Grading Of Movement":**

- difficulty regulating pressure when writing/drawing; may be too light to see or so hard the tip of writing utensil breaks
- written work is messy and he/she often rips the paper when erasing
- always seems to be breaking objects and toys
- misjudges the weight of an object, such as a glass of juice, picking it up with too much force sending it flying or spilling, or with too little force and complaining about objects being too heavy
- may not understand the idea of "heavy" or "light"; would not be able to hold two objects and tell you which weighs more
- seems to do everything with too much force; i.e., walking, slamming doors, pressing things too hard, slamming objects down

**Signs of Auditory Dysfunction: (no diagnosed hearing problem)**

**Hypersensitivity to Sounds (Auditory Defensiveness):**

- distracted by sounds not normally noticed by others; i.e., humming of lights or refrigerators, fans, heaters, or clocks ticking
- fearful of the sound of a flushing toilet (especially in public bathrooms), vacuum, hairdryer, squeaky shoes, or a dog barking
- startled with or distracted by loud or unexpected sounds

\_\_\_ bothered/distracted by background environmental sounds; i.e., lawn mowing or outside construction

\_\_\_ frequently asks people to be quiet; i.e., stop making noise, talking, or singing

\_\_\_ runs away, cries, and/or covers ears with loud or unexpected sounds

\_\_\_ may decide whether they like certain people by the sound of their voice

### **Hyposensitivity to Sounds (Under-Registers):**

\_\_\_ often does not respond to verbal cues or to name being called

\_\_\_ appears to "make noise for noise's sake"

\_\_\_ loves excessively loud music or TV

\_\_\_ seems to have difficulty understanding or remembering what was said

\_\_\_ appears oblivious to certain sounds

\_\_\_ appears confused about where a sound is coming from

\_\_\_ talks self through a task, often out loud

\_\_\_ needs directions repeated often, or will say, "What?" frequently

## **Signs of Oral Input Dysfunction:**

### **Hypersensitivity To Oral Input (Oral Defensiveness):**

\_\_\_ picky eater, often with extreme food preferences; i.e., limited repertoire of foods, picky about brands, resistive to trying new foods or restaurants, and may not eat at other people's houses)

\_\_\_ may only eat "soft" or pureed foods past 24 months of age

\_\_\_ may gag with textured foods

\_\_\_ has difficulty with sucking, chewing, and swallowing; may choke or have a fear of choking

\_\_\_ may only eat hot or cold foods

\_\_\_ avoids seasoned, spicy, sweet, sour or salty foods; prefers bland foods

### **Hyposensitivity to Oral Input (Under-Registers)**

- \_\_\_ may lick, taste, or chew on inedible objects
- \_\_\_ prefers foods with intense flavor; i.e., excessively spicy, sweet, sour, or salty
- \_\_\_ excessive drooling past the teething stage
- \_\_\_ frequently chews on hair, shirt, or fingers
- \_\_\_ constantly putting objects in mouth past the toddler years
- \_\_\_ acts as if all foods taste the same

### **Signs of Olfactory Dysfunction (Smells):**

#### **Hypersensitivity To Smells (Over-Responsive):**

- \_\_\_ reacts negatively to, or dislikes smells which do not usually bother, or get noticed, by other people
- \_\_\_ tells other people (or talks about) how bad or funny they smell
- \_\_\_ refuses to eat certain foods because of their smell
- \_\_\_ offended and/or nauseated by bathroom odors or personal hygiene smells
- \_\_\_ bothered/irritated by smell of perfume or cologne
- \_\_\_ decides whether he/she likes someone or some place by the way it smells

#### **Hyposensitivity To Smells (Under-Responsive):**

- \_\_\_ has difficulty discriminating unpleasant odors
- \_\_\_ unable to identify smells from scratch 'n sniff stickers
- \_\_\_ does not notice odors that others usually complain about
- \_\_\_ fails to notice or ignores unpleasant odors
- \_\_\_ makes excessive use of smelling when introduced to objects, people, or places
- \_\_\_ uses smell to interact with objects



## **Signs Of Visual Input Dysfunction (No Diagnosed Visual Deficit):**

### **Hypersensitivity to Visual Input (Over-Responsiveness)**

\_\_\_ sensitive to bright lights; will squint, cover eyes, cry and/or get headaches from the light

\_\_\_ has difficulty keeping eyes focused on task/activity he/she is working on for an appropriate amount of time

\_\_\_ easily distracted by other visual stimuli in the room; i.e., movement, decorations, toys, windows, doorways etc.

\_\_\_ has difficulty in bright colorful rooms or a dimly lit room

\_\_\_ rubs his/her eyes, has watery eyes or gets headaches after reading or watching TV

\_\_\_ avoids eye contact

\_\_\_ enjoys playing in the dark

### **Hyposensitivity to Visual Input (Under-Responsive Or Difficulty With Tracking, Discrimination, Or Perception):**

\_\_\_ has difficulty telling the difference between similar printed letters or figures; i.e., p & q, b & d, + and x, or square and rectangle

\_\_\_ has a hard time seeing the "big picture"; i.e., focuses on the details or patterns within the picture

\_\_\_ has difficulty locating items among other items; i.e., papers on a desk, clothes in a drawer, items on a grocery shelf, or toys in a bin/toy box

\_\_\_ often loses place when copying from a book or the chalkboard

\_\_\_ difficulty controlling eye movement to track and follow moving objects

\_\_\_ has difficulty telling the difference between different colors, shapes, and sizes

\_\_\_ often loses his/her place while reading or doing math problems

\_\_\_ makes reversals in words or letters when copying, or reads words backwards; i.e., "was" for "saw" and "no" for "on" after first grade

\_\_\_ complains about "seeing double"

\_\_\_ difficulty finding differences in pictures, words, symbols, or objects

\_\_\_ difficulty with consistent spacing and size of letters during writing and/or lining up numbers in math problems

\_\_\_ difficulty with jigsaw puzzles, copying shapes, and/or cutting/tracing along a line

\_\_\_ tends to write at a slant (up or down hill) on a page

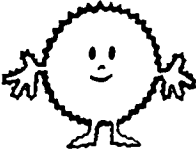

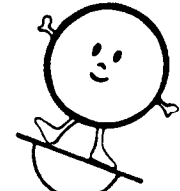

\_\_\_ confuses left and right


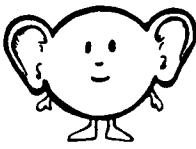
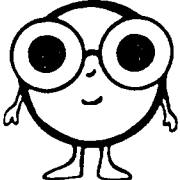
\_\_\_ fatigues easily with schoolwork

\_\_\_ difficulty judging spatial relationships in the environment; i.e., bumps into objects/people or missteps on curbs and stairs

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# CALMING AND ALERTING SENSORY ACTIVITIES

Sensory Area	Calming Activities	Alerting Activities
<p>Tactile</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wear weighted vests or ankle weights</li> <li>• Snuggle under blankets</li> <li>• Play with resistive putty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustain light touch to the palm of the hand</li> <li>• Hold something cold</li> <li>• Gently and quickly rub the skin</li> <li>• Take a cool shower or wash face with cool washcloth</li> <li>• Receive a light back scratch</li> <li>• Pet a dog or cat</li> <li>• Handle fidget items</li> </ul>
<p>Proprioceptive</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Push heavy furniture</li> <li>• Push a heavy cart to deliver library books or retrieve lunch trays</li> <li>• Carry boxes, laundry basket, or unload groceries</li> <li>• Vacuum the floor</li> <li>• Do "wheelbarrow walk"</li> <li>• Carry a weighted blanket</li> <li>• Wear a fanny pack</li> <li>• Carry a weighted backpack</li> <li>• Jump into a squishy pile of pillows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help by passing out papers, erasing the board, or delivering a message</li> <li>• Exercise, dance, wriggle</li> </ul>
<p>Vestibular</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jump on a trampoline or do jumping jacks</li> <li>• Swing on playground equipment</li> <li>• Rock in a rocking chair</li> <li>• Roll back and forth in a barrel</li> <li>• Take a break to do an errand</li> <li>• Swing in a hammock</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jump on a trampoline or do jumping jacks</li> <li>• Hang upside down on a jungle gym</li> <li>• Ride a scooter down a ramp</li> <li>• Sit and bounce on a therapy ball</li> <li>• Stand and twirl in a circle</li> <li>• Bend over and place head between legs</li> <li>• Do somersaults and cartwheels</li> </ul>
<p>Gustatory</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chew or suck on mild flavors such as suckers, hard candy, or chew toys</li> <li>• Suck thick liquids through a straw</li> <li>• Drink from a sports water bottle</li> <li>• Chew/suck on a keychain or necklace</li> <li>• Chew/suck on a pen top</li> <li>• Play a musical instrument</li> <li>• Blow whistles, bubbles, feathers, balloons, cotton balls, etc.</li> <li>• Drink warm liquids, such as hot chocolate, cider, soup</li> <li>• Engage in eating chewing, sucking, and blowing activities</li> <li>• Engage in blowing activities paired with eye-tracking exercises (blow ping-pong ball with straw)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat crunchy foods, such as pretzels, ice, carrots, celery, apples</li> <li>• Eat chewy foods, such as licorice, taffy, beef jerky, gum</li> <li>• Blow whistles, bubbles, feathers, balloons, cotton balls, etc.</li> <li>• Eat ice or popsicles</li> <li>• Keep a water bottle with cold water on desk</li> <li>• Eat crunchy, sour, chewy, salty, or cold foods</li> <li>• Engage in eating chewing, sucking and blowing activities</li> </ul>

Sensory Area	Calming Activities	Alerting Activities
Olfactory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burn a vanilla scented candle (if child, under adult supervision)</li> <li>• Smell potpourri in the classroom</li> <li>• Incorporate preferred scents within academic tasks (e.g., writing with a scented pen)</li> <li>• Use scented crayons or markers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use scented lotion or soap between activities</li> <li>• Spray a citrus room deodorizer before academic activities</li> <li>• Use scented materials in projects</li> <li>• Receive scratch-and-sniff stickers as a reward</li> </ul>
Auditory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to quiet music with slow, even beat</li> <li>• Listen to soft singing or humming</li> <li>• Cover ears when a loud or unexpected noise happens</li> <li>• Work in a quiet environment</li> <li>• Use headphones to shield from noise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to music with varied pitch, sound loudness or uneven/fast beat</li> <li>• Speak with animated high and low voice</li> <li>• Enjoy frequent opportunities to examine novel sound-producing toys (e.g., chimes, squeeze toys, rain stick)</li> <li>• Use sound-producing materials to complete classroom projects (e.g., talking calculator books on tape, Yak Back [Yes! Entertainment Corp.; 1-925-847-9444] for verbal directions)</li> <li>• Prepare in advance for loud/strange noises</li> </ul>
Visual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in dim light or with lights turned off</li> <li>• Block distractions by using a screen, room divider, or study carrel</li> <li>• Wear sunglasses</li> <li>• Provide visual materials such as a glitter wand, oil and water toys, fish tank</li> <li>• Work at distraction-free desk</li> <li>• Work in soft or limited light and pastel colors</li> <li>• Work in natural rather than artificial light</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in bright lights</li> <li>• Use a flashlight to point or highlight important information</li> <li>• Use brightly colored paper</li> <li>• Use a highlighter to underline important text</li> <li>• Use colored chalk</li> <li>• Use a slant board to place materials at an angle</li> <li>• Use bright lights or colors</li> </ul>

Adapted with permission from *Learn to Move, Move to Learn! Sensorimotor Early Childhood Activity Themes* by Jenny Clark Brack, 2004; Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company; and *Sensation Station* by Lisa Robbins and Nancy Miller, 2006. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company.