

# Sensory Processing





**Aims**

To explore the way sensory processing may be different for children on the autism spectrum

To explore ways to understand and support the sensory sensitivities of your child





Sensory processing is the ability to feel, understand, change and respond, both physically and emotionally, to sensory input from our bodies and the environment.

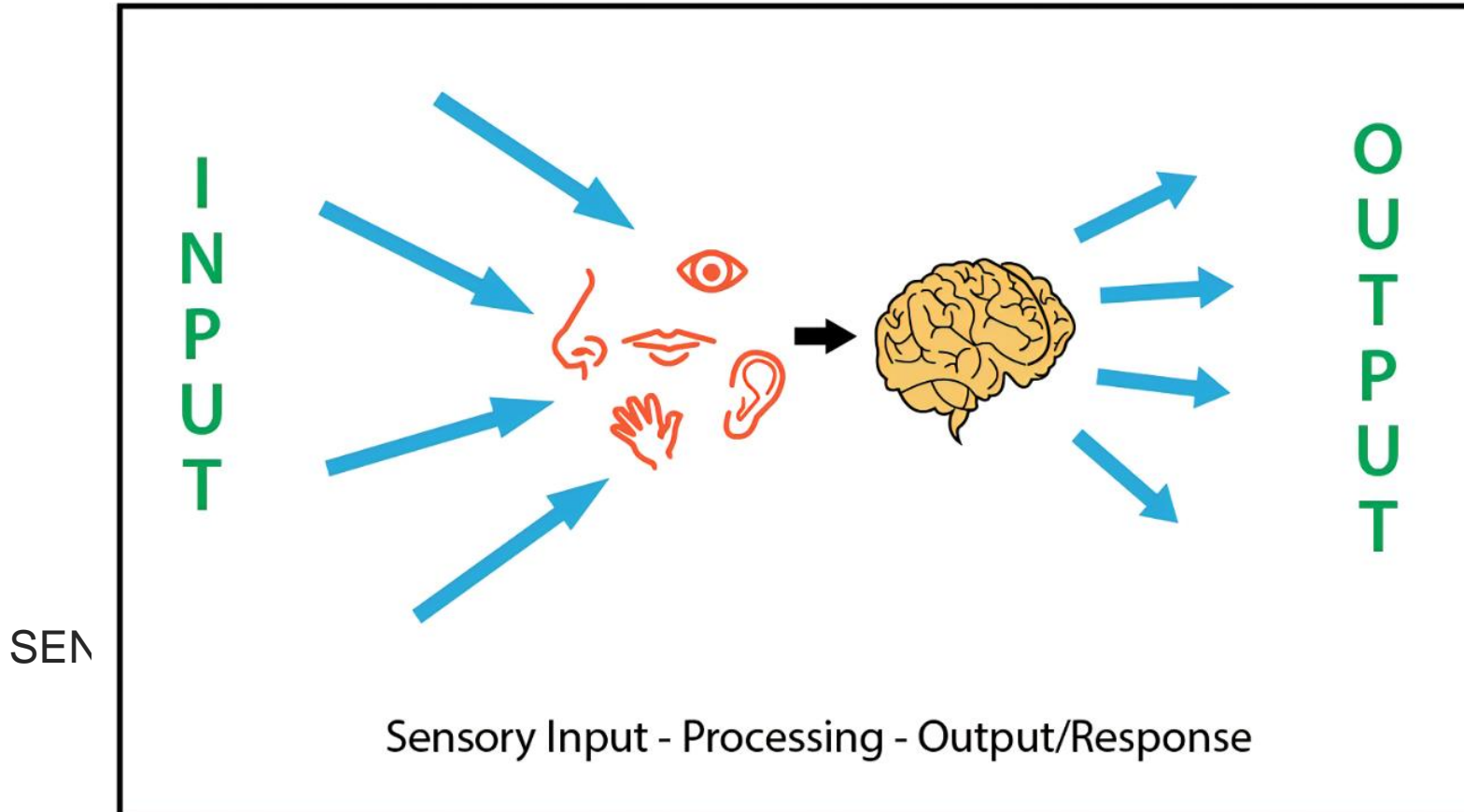
It allows us to respond to the sensory input in a meaningful and appropriate way and make an appropriate response to meet the demands of the environment.

For the most part having different sensory preferences doesn't make a big difference to our life or our ability to learn, work, play and carry out every-day tasks.

**Key Resource:** Sensory Issues in Autism (East Sussex Council)



# Sensory Processing Differences



Sensory issues can occur in any of the sensory processing systems:

- tactile (touch)
- visual (sight)
- auditory (hearing)
- gustatory (taste)
- olfactory (smell),
- vestibular (balance)
- proprioceptive (body awareness)
- interoceptive (sense of bodies internal state).



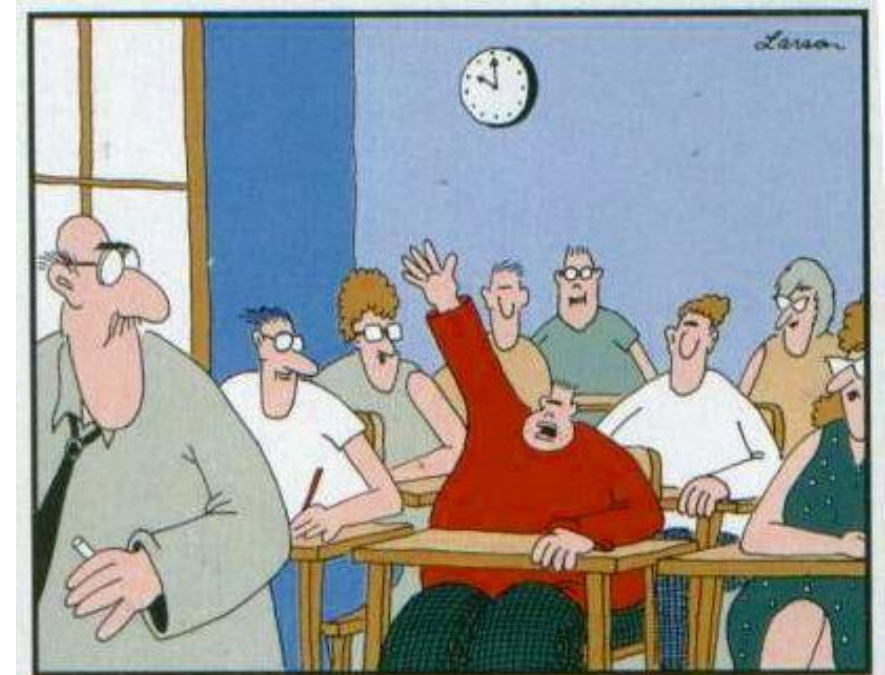
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ycCN3qTYVyo>



Pages 1 and 2

Sensory overload happens when there is too much information coming in at once and this is overwhelming. Children may not be able to filter out anything irrelevant such as background noise, wallpaper, the feel of clothes on their skin or people moving around. This means they have to try and process everything at once rather than just what is relevant at the time.

**Friendships, concentration, behaviour, co-ordination, diet and sleeping may all be affected by sensory processing differences.**



"Mr. Osborne, may I be excused?  
My brain is full."

**Key Strategy:** Sensory Profile







*“The sensory overload caused by bright lights, fluorescent lights, colours and patterns makes the body react as if being attacked or bombarded, resulting in such physical symptoms as headaches, anxiety, panic attacks or aggression.”*



Donna Williams




System	Hyper (over responsive)	Hypo (under responsive)
<p><b>Touch</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warn them if you are about to touch them</li> <li>• Remember hugs may be painful rather than comforting!</li> <li>• Gradually introduce different textures e.g., material book</li> <li>• Allow them to complete activities themselves (e.g. hair brushing)</li> <li>• Turning clothes inside out so there is no seam, removing any tags or labels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tight or heavy clothing may give proprioceptive and tactile input</li> <li>• Consider activities that give them experience of tactile input e.g., messy play</li> <li>• Use a sensory toys</li> <li>• Allow them to experiment with light and heavy pressure so they learn to understand the difference</li> </ul>
<p><b>Visual</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce fluorescent lighting</li> <li>• Sunglasses</li> <li>• Create a workstation/space</li> <li>• Use blackout blinds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use resources which stimulate visual system e.g., light sticks</li> </ul>






System	Hyper (over responsive)	Hypo (under responsive)
<p><b>Taste</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow opportunities to taste lots of different things to aid sense development</li> <li>• Encourage them to 'clean out' mouth with water between mouthfuls</li> <li>• Puree foods</li> <li>• Use ice pops to desensitise mouth</li> <li>• Introduce very small bites of portions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow opportunities to taste strong flavours</li> <li>• Provide oral stimulation throughout the day e.g., crunchy foods, blowing bubbles, drinking thicker liquids through a straw</li> <li>• Redirect to more appropriate chewy item</li> </ul>
<p><b>Auditory</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shut windows and doors to reduce external sound</li> <li>• Prepare for noisy places</li> <li>• Ear plugs/ear defenders</li> <li>• Listen to favourite music</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use visual cues</li> <li>• Listen to favourite music</li> <li>• Use theirs name to get attention and allow extra processing time</li> </ul>




System	Hyper (over responsive)	Hypo (under responsive)
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Smell</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use unscented detergents or shampoos</li> <li>• Refrain from wearing perfume</li> <li>• Make environment as fragrance free as possible</li> <li>• Keep rooms ventilated</li> <li>• Allow access to preferred scents</li> <li>• Think about meal times</li> <li>• Avoid places with strong unpleasant odours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use strong smelling objects as rewards</li> <li>• Use strong smelling objects to distract from inappropriate strong smells e.g., scented playdough</li> <li>• Provide activities which stimulate smell e.g., Create a book of scents</li> <li>• Teach the them how to spot bad smells using others' reactions (body language and facial expressions).</li> </ul>



System	Hyper (over responsive)	Hypo (under responsive)
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Balance</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break down activities into small steps</li> <li>• Use visual clues for finish lines or stops in movement activities</li> <li>• Avoid activities which involve using equipment at a height</li> <li>• Offer activities involving gentle movement</li> <li>• Avoid activities with fast or rotary movements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage activities which develop the vestibular system – swing, roundabout, rocking horse, see-saw, dancing</li> <li>• Use alternative seating e.g. specialised cushion, ball chair</li> <li>• Ensure access to movement activities at regular intervals throughout the day</li> </ul>



System	Hyper (over responsive)	Hypo (under responsive)
<p><b>Body Awareness</b></p> 		<p>Input to the muscles and joints is regulating: it can be both calming and alerting. This can be provided through resistance activities, weightbearing activities, moving heavy items or the provision of deep pressure input. Activities in which the student is actively engaged are more effective than passive input provided by an adult.</p> <p>Provide activities at regular intervals throughout the day:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weightbearing activities e.g. crawling, push-ups</li> <li>• Resistance activities e.g. pushing/pulling</li> </ul>



**Watch the following film clip.**

What strategies might have helped the boy to avoid sensory overload?



**Activity**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPknwW8mPAM>

Think about your own child's  
sensory differences and  
sensitivities

How does this impact on them  
and you?

We will share this with the group

**Activity**





**Useful Resources and websites:**

**General advice on sensory strategies**

Middletown Centre for Autism

<http://sensory-processing.middletownautism.com/sensory-strategies/>

National Autistic Society

<https://www.autism.org.uk/sensory>

Oxfordshire NHS Occupational Therapy

<https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/childrens-occupational-therapy/resources/>

**Key Resource: Sensory Issues in Autism (East Sussex Council)**

<https://www.aettraininghubs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/sensory-issues-in-autism.pdf>



## Books

***Asperger Syndrome and Sensory Issues: Practical Solutions for Making Sense of the World*** by Brenda Smith Myles et al (AAPC)

***Raising a Sensory Smart Child. The definitive Handbook for Helping Your Child with Sensory Processing issues*** by Lindsey Biel and Nancy Peske (Penguin)

***The Sensory World of The Autistic Spectrum: A Greater Understanding*** by Kate Williams (NAS)

***Sensational Kids Hope and help for Children with Sensory Processing Disorder*** by Lucy Jane Miller (Penguin)

***Understanding Sensory Dysfunction*** by Polly Godwin Emmons And Liz McKendry Anderson (JKP)

***Squirmy Wormy How I Learned to Help Myself*** by Lynda Farrington –Wilson

***The Out of Sync Child and The Out of Sync Child has Fun (Practical strategies)*** by Carol Stock Kranowitz (Penguin)



**Thank you for your attention and participation.**  
**The next session is session four:-**

## **Emotional Wellbeing**

