

Sensory Processing Disorder

Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) is a condition that impacts the brain's ability to process different sensory information or different stimuli. This disorder may impact all senses, several senses, or it may impact one sense. SPD can cause individuals to be overly sensitive or under-sensitive to stimuli.

SPD impacts a person's ability to participate in everyday activities.

8 Signs of Sensory Processing Disorder

1. Auditory sensitivity
2. Smell sensitivity
3. Visual sensitivity
4. Difficulty concentrating
5. Poor fine motor skills
6. Difficulty with textures
7. Does not feel pain or touch normally
8. May have difficulty with gross motor skills



Sensory Processing Disorder

Occupational therapists use sensory integration therapy to help a child organize information received from their senses and respond appropriately to the information gained. While sensory integration therapy can target many different senses, the most common systems impacted are the vestibular, proprioception, and tactile systems.



Vestibular System

The vestibular system is within the inner ear. This system is responsible for receiving sensory information about body movement and gravity. It helps individuals maintain balance and equilibrium through space.

Disruptions to the vestibular system may cause individuals to be over responsive or under responsive. They may have poor coordination, poor balance, or seek out movements like spinning.



Vestibular System

Activities for Input:

- Activities that involve hanging upside down
- Playing on playground equipment
- Dancing



Prioprioception

The proprioceptive system is within every single muscle in the body. It helps with body awareness like knowing how much force is needed to move objects or knowing the body's exact location in space.

Individuals that have difficulty with proprioception may fall frequently, excessively chew on items (shirt sleeves, nonfood items), play roughly and seem aggressive, throw themselves into items like the floor or wall, and walk on their tip toes.



Proprioception

Activities for Proprioception Regulation:

- Heavy work like pushing or pulling heavy objects
- Running or jumping
- Deep pressure like tight hugs



Tactile

Tactile refers to how one experiences touch. For individuals with tactile sensitivity different textures may feel less comfortable or more painful. Individuals with tactile sensitivity may have difficulty wearing different textures, participating in grooming (hair brushing, teeth brushing), not like to be touched, being a picky eater, or have strong aversions to being dirty.



Tactile

Activities for Tactile Regulation:

- Touching different textures or different objects
- Playing with water
- Completing arts and crafts or messy activities like finger painting



Sensory Processing Disorder

If you are concerned that your child may have sensory processing disorder, it is important to get evaluated by an occupational therapist. Occupational therapists are trained to evaluate and treat individuals with sensory processing disorder.

