

SENSORY DIFFERENCES

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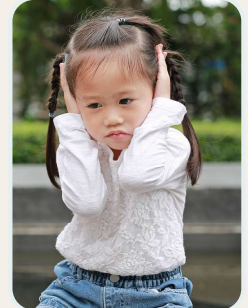
Pediatric speech-language pathologist and parent of an autistic child

SENSORY OVER-RESPONSIVITY

The over-responsive child is easily overwhelmed by small amounts of sensory input.

Common Characteristics

- Is overly cautious and apprehensive of new experiences
- Prefers predictable routines; dislikes change; is upset by transitions; finds safety and comfort in the familiar
- Is unable to tolerate loud or unexpected noises
- Dislikes swinging, sliding, and exploring playground equipment
- Avoids group activities; prefers to play alone
- Is distressed during hygiene routines (brushing teeth, hair cuts)
- Dislikes having dirty or sticky hands; is bothered by playing in the grass



SENSORY UNDER-RESPONSIVITY

The under-responsive child requires more intense input for longer periods of time before the nervous system registers information coming in through the senses.

Common Characteristics

- Is slow to respond (frequently says "what?" or "huh?" when spoken to)
- Is unmotivated to become more independent with dressing, feeding, and toileting
- Often seems unaware of what is going on in the environment
- Has a high pain tolerance; isn't bothered by most injuries
- Seems unaware of bodily sensations (hunger, thirst, fatigue)
- Dislikes trying new physical activities
- Prefers sedentary activities such as screen time, coloring, reading, and playing with blocks



SENSORY CRAVING

The sensory craving child is overly active, highly impulsive, and seeks out intense sensory experiences.

Common Characteristics

- Is always on the move
- Takes bold risks during play; knows no fear
- Likes TV and music to be played at a high volume
- Shows a strong preference for activities such as jumping, crashing, spinning, swinging, climbing, rolling, and chewing on non-food items
- Is difficult to take places that require the child to sit still or be quiet



*Sensory integration therapy with an occupational therapist should be considered for children whose sensory differences are interfering with learning and development