Sensory Processing

Hyper
Receiving too much information

Hypo
Receiving too little information

Sensory Processing Disorder
Sensory processing is when the nervous system processes the message it has received from the senses and the resulting motor or behavioural response. In sensory processing disorder (also known as sensory integration disorder/dysfunction), the sensory signals are not interpreted in the typical way. A person with SPD will find it difficult to process and respond to the information received from the senses.

There are three main subtypes:

Sensory Modulation Disorder
Difficulty regulating response to sensory stimuli.

This subtype is broken down further into: Sensory Over Responsivity, Sensory Under Responsivity and Sensory Craving.

Sensory Based Motor Disorder
Difficulty with balance and coordination + skilled motor tasks.

This subtype is broken down into: Dyspraxia and Postural Disorder

Sensory Discrimination Disorder
Difficulty in understanding sensory stimuli, i.e. difficulties in understanding what is seen, heard, tasted, felt and smelt. This subtype is broken down further into each of the sensory systems.

Hypersensitive
- tinted lenses
- wide brimmed hats/sunglasses
- avoid glare/bright lights – use of blinds or lamps
- minimise visual clutter - consider a calm area with minimal visual clutter as well as relaxing and calming items
- consider their colour preferences

Hypersensitive
- messy food play – playing with food, using food to make things, e.g. pictures from dried pasta
- trays/plates with sections to separate the foods

Hypersensitive
- warn before touching
- avoid approaching from behind
- use firm pressure when touching
- offer heavy work, e.g. carrying books

Hyposensitive
- cooking activities in the timetable
- timetabled snack times

Hyposensitive
- messy play, e.g. mud, foam, paints, ice
- fidget toys, e.g. stress balls

Hypersensitive
- practise balancing at their own rate
- warn of sudden movements

Hyposensitive
- sensory lights, bubble tubes, lava lamps
- mirror balls, disco balls

Taste

Tactile

Vesti

Hyposensitive
- rolling
- spinning
- balance activities, e.g. space hoppers, balance board, therapy ball

tubes, lava lamps

- mirror balls, disco balls
- spinning tops and wheels
- pouring play, e.g. pouring sand, water, rice, confetti, glitter

Visual

SPD can occur in each of the sensory systems: Visual, Auditory, Vestibular (Movement), Smell, Taste, Tactile, Proprioception (Body Sense).

These are some ideas you could try.

Vestibular

- balance activities, e.g. space hoppers, balance board, therapy ball
- swinging

Sound

Hyposensitive

- banging on pots/pans, wind chimes, rainmakers
- musical instruments
- cause-and-effect toys
- listening to music
- give time to respond to speech

Smell

Hyposensitive

- use a range of smells - some that are relaxing, some that are calming and some that are stimulating
- add scents to playdough
- create a 'smellory' - a range of different smells on cotton wool in small containers or herbs/plants, etc.
- sensory gardens with fragrant herbs and plants

Proprioception

Hyposensitive

- pushing/pulling activities
- jumping
- weighted objects

Hypersensitive

- give warning about noises that are about to happen
- avoid sudden loud noises/ shouting/use visual cues
- a quiet, calm space with dim lighting
- listen to preferred music
- soft toys/toys that make a gentle sound
- headphones/ear defenders

Hypersensitive

- slowly introduce movement activities - allow time to process

Hypersensitive

- try to find out which smells are having a negative effect (consider hand creams, shower gels, aftershaves, perfumes, cleaning products, etc.)
- play with foods

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