Sensory Processing Issues: Strategies to Use At Home

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What is Sensory Processing?

**Sensory Processing**: How the nervous system receives input from the senses and turns input into appropriate motor and behavioral responses.

- Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD)
  - Spectrum

**Sensory vs. Behavior**
Breaking It Down:

- Over-responsive
  - Avoiders (hypersensitive, low threshold for sensory input)
- Under-responsive
  - Seekers (hyposensitive, high threshold for sensory input)

- 7 senses:
  - Visual, Auditory, Olfactory, Taste, Tactile
  - Vestibular = sense of movement
  - Proprioception = sense of “body awareness”
Sensorimotor Strategies:

- **Visual Strategies**
  - Turning lights on or off
  - Visual “blocking”
  - Consider the environment (color, distractions, clutter)

- **Auditory Strategies**
  - Listening to music
    - Modifying volume, tempo (upbeat vs slow)
  - Natural sounds (outside, nature)
  - Noise cancelling headphones
  - Giving control over noise
Sensorimotor Strategies:

- **Olfactory Strategies**
  - Consider the environment
  - Aromatherapy

- **Taste Strategies**
  - Sucking on a straw
  - Crunch, chew, pull
  - Sour candy
Sensorimotor Strategies:

- **Tactile Strategies**
  - Light touch vs deep touch
  - “Messy play”

- **Vestibular Strategies = sense of movement**
  - Swing, spin, roll
  - Cartwheels, jumping jacks

- **Proprioceptive Strategies = sense of body awareness**
  - Lifting, Pushing, Pulling
  - Heavy work (see “additional heavy work activities for home” slides)
Commonly Used “Sensory” Language & Frameworks

● The Alert program ®
  ○ “How does your engine run?”
    ■ High, low, just right “engine”

● The Zones of Regulation
  ○ “Red, Yellow, Green, Blue” zones
Sensory Diets

- A sensory diet is a group of activities used to help improve a person’s attention, arousal and adaptive response to sensory input

- An ideal sensory diet is:
  - Individualized
  - Used proactively
  - Includes functional activities
  - Meets a “just-right challenge”
Highlights:

- The ability to “self-regulate” requires a lot of self-reflection and awareness
- Sensorimotor strategies are NOT one size fits all
- Proactive sensory input throughout the day is optimal
- The best sensory activities are functional and easy to carryover in many different environments
- Individuals should be active participants in all sensory activities
  - They do the activity, not done for them
Additional Proprioceptive/Heavy Work Strategies for Home:

- Opening and holding doors for others
- Chair push ups or chair “dips”
- Push against a wall
- Fall or “crashing” into a beanbag chair
- Slowly roll a ball, bolster or cushion over the child, applying pressure
- Having a child bounce on a Hippity Hop ball
- Sandwich games (child is placed between beanbags, sofa cushions, mattresses and light pressure is applied to top layer and child has to escape)
- Play catch with a heavy ball
- Bounce and roll a heavy ball
- Animal walks (crab walk, bear walk, army crawl)
- Play "row, row, row your boat" both sitting on the floor, pushing and pulling each other
- Theraputty
- Jumping on a mini trampoline
- Stacking chairs
- Two children can play "tug of war" with jump rope or heavy theraband. (If you use the theraband, children need supervision so they don't purposely let go of theraband and "snap" the other child)
Additional Proprioceptive/Heavy Work Strategies for Home:

- Carry heavy items when walking places (box of blocks, groceries, a backpack, etc.)
- Take the cushions off the sofas, vacuum under them, then put them back. Can also climb on them, hide under them, jump and "crash" into them, play sandwich games with them
- Pull other kids around on a sheet or blanket
- Pull a heavy trash can
- Yard work including raking grass/leaves, pushing a child’s wheelbarrow
- Housework including dusting, vacuuming and mopping, carrying buckets of water to clean with or to water flowers/plants/trees
- Child can help rearrange his/her bedroom furniture
- Have child put large toys and equipment away
- Wipe off the table after dinner
- Suck applesauce through a straw, eating a “Go-gurt” like product that requires sucking through the package
- Scrub rough surfaces with a brush
- Pillow fights
- Have the child "help" by pushing in chairs to a table
- After a bath, parents can squeeze child and rub him/her briskly with a towel
- Use heavy quilts at night and tight flannel pajamas
- Swimming. Also, have child dive after weighted sticks thrown in pool
Additional Proprioceptive/Heavy Work Strategies for Home:

- Dancing
- Activities such as gymnastics, horseback riding, wrestling, karate
- Wash the car, or having child carry buckets of water to help wash car
- Carry the laundry basket
- Jump or climb in inner tubes
- Fill up a child's suitcase with heavy items (such as books) and push/pull the suitcase across the room
- When travelling, let child pull own small suitcase on wheels
- Go "shopping" with a child's shopping cart filled with items
- Child can help change the sheets on the bed, then toss the linens down the stairs
- Go "camping" with a heavy blanket pulled across a few chairs. Child can help set up and take down the blanket
- Sports activities involving running and jumping; walking up a ramp or incline
- Have the child color a "rainbow" with large paper on the floor or with sidewalk chalk outside while child is on his/her hands and knees
- Hot dog" game where child lies across end of a blanket and is rolled (ends up inside the rolled up blanket with head outside)
- Play wrestling: pushing game where two people lock hands facing each other and try to see who can push and make the other person step back first. Use other body parts also, but be sure to have rules (no hitting, no biting, no scratching, one person says stop then both stop)
Questions & Answers

• Thank you for your attention and participation!
• Please write questions into chat feature and let us know of additional topics you would like covered
• For copies of slides, please email: audrey.rouhandeh@mssm.edu or bari.britvan@mssm.edu
Resources on Sensory Activities and COVID-19

Autism Society of Oregon, Recipes for DIY Sensory Tools

Special Mom Advocate, 42 Sensory Crafts for Kids with Autism, SPD and ADHD
https://www.specialmomadvocate.com/sensory-crafts/