

The Sensory Needs of Infants and Toddlers

**Presented by
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Our Natural Senses

- Sight
(Vision)



- Touch
(Tactile)



- Smell
(Olfactory)



- Movement
(Vestibular)



- Hearing
(Auditory)



- Taste
(Gustatory)



- Position
(Proprioception)



The SENSE of POSITION: Proprioception

Sensations From Muscles and Joints

This sense is important in order to know where your arms and legs are positioned in space.



The SENSE of MOVEMENT: Vestibular

Sensations From the Inner Ear Received During Movement

This sense is important for the development of balance, coordination, attention and emotional state, and muscle readiness for movement (muscle tone).



Children learn through sensory experiences.

Sensory learning promotes higher learning.

Problem Solving	Concepts	Reading	Writing	Math
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Smell (Olfactory)	Hearing (Auditory)	Movement (Vestibular)	Touch (Tactile)	Position (Proprioception)	Sight (Vision)	Taste (Gustatory)
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Everyday Activities Provide Many Opportunities for Sensory Exploration and Learning

Examples Include:

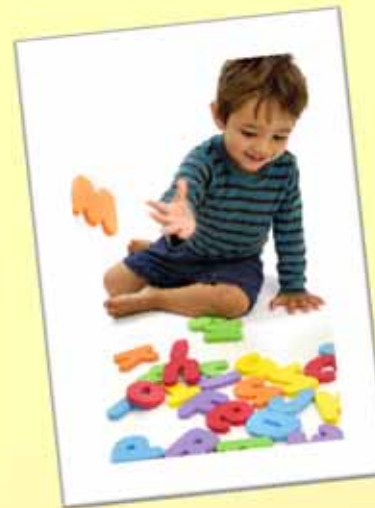
- **Books/Reading**
- **Music**
- **Transitioning from busy activities to quiet activities**
- **Playing with others**
- **Indoor play**
- **Outdoor play**
- **Eating**
- **Diaper changes**
- **Dressing**



Sensory Processing Difficulties

At a Glance

- **Negative behaviors happen before a regular daily activity**
- **Avoidance of group activities**
- **Frequently fearful or anxious**
- **Strongly prefers adults to children**
- **Does not like to be cuddled**
- **Difficulty with transitions, such as between home and child care or between activities**
- **Becomes easily frustrated or upset**
- **Often appears clumsy**
- **Touches others, invades or occupies the other's space**
- **Consistently avoids creative art activities**



Sensory Processing is Unique to the Individual

Opposite Sides of the Sensory Coin

Very Sensitive Child



“Can’t Get Enough” Child



Behaviors are Windows to Understanding

Behaviors provide clues for understanding children's unspoken abilities to enjoy or simply their attempts to try and cope with their world.

Behavioral messages might include:

- **I want to please.**
- **I know how much I can take in, please understand me.**
- **Stress heightens my sensitivity.**
- **I need to know what is going to happen next.**
- **I need to trust you as an adult.**
- **I like to be successful, even if I need a little help.**
- **I like to try doing it all by myself.**
- **Please love me; I am doing my best.**



Observing one behavior does not mean the child is dealing with a sensory issue.

Observing patterns of behavior over time is important in understanding a child's messages.

Everyone Can Play the Sensory Way

Create an environment that allows children to explore activities using their senses in ways that enhance growth and learning.

- **Create the “just right challenge”- provide children opportunities to explore tactile materials, never force a child to participate, provide alternatives.**
- **Success and a positive experience are the focus - full participation and/or a finished product does not always mean the child benefited from the experience.**
- **Outside free play provides an opportunity to run, but inside opportunities are also lots of fun!**



Everyone Can Play the Sensory Way

Create an environment that provides opportunities for active-alert play and calm-quiet play.

- Use your voice as a modulator.
- Set the mood with lighting and music.
- Bean bag chairs, pillows and tents make comfy corners for quiet learners.



Basics of Sensory Experiences

- Encourage but never force participation
- Process is more important than product (creative art experiences)
- Add heavy work whenever possible (my little helper)
- Know the importance of the environment and how that can create success
- Stop and think about why a behavior might be happening



Calming Attributes

- Slow
- Quiet
- Rhythmic
- Heavy Work
- Deep Pressure Touch
- Dim Lighting
- Neutral Warmth



Alerting Attributes

- Fast
- Loud
- Irregular/Changing Rhythm
- Squiggles and Wiggles
- Light Touch
- Bright Lighting
- Cooler Temperatures

Online Resources

- www.zerotothree.org
- www.infantva.org
- <http://notjustcute.com>
- <http://out-of-sync-child.com>

