

Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD)

SPD is characterized by a difficulty with organizing and responding to information that comes in through the senses. People may be over-sensitive to sensory input, under-sensitive, or both, and as a result daily routine and activities can be seriously disrupted.

Your senses are not just limited to the five you think of, i.e. sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste. There are also “hidden” senses called proprioception (self-movement and body position), vestibular (body balance, rotation, and gravitation) and interoception (understanding and feeling what is going on inside your body).

Bright lights, itchy clothes, smells, or food textures can all cause a child with SPD to become quickly overwhelmed.

TYPES OF SPDs

- **Hypersensitivity:** A person is over-sensitive towards a certain stimulus. This will lead the person to try to avoid this sensation.
- **Hyposensitivity:** A person is under-sensitive toward a certain stimulus. This will lead the person to try to seek out this sensation.

COMMON ISSUES WITH SPDs

- **Out of proportion reactions:** A person may have out of proportion reactions to touch, sight, smells, or movements that can include behaviours from complete shut down (silence and avoidance) to full meltdown.
- **Touch:** A person may be resistant to or distressed by touching.
- **Uncomfortable with change:** A person may refuse to try new things such as food and will be labelled as a “picky eater”.
- **Unusual levels of activity:** A child with SPD may have an unusually high level of activity (wanting to touch/jump on everything) or an unusually low level.
- **Poor attention and lack of focus:** A child with SPD may have trouble focusing in the classroom.

HOW WE SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH SPDs

- ✓ Taking regular appropriate sensory breaks to support student focus
- ✓ Developing good sensory habits and supporting older students to identify their triggers
- ✓ Using full-body movement to enhance teaching
- ✓ Integrating expert support (OT) with classroom, home, and tutoring to develop consistency and comfort for the student

“My shoes and clothes always feel too tight, I can’t think about anything else if I have the wrong stuff on.”



ruth rumack's
LEARNING SPACE