



**Finding Solutions
Changing Lives**

Many people find it difficult to process sensory information they receive. Any of the senses, Sight, Hearing, Smell, Taste and Touch (external senses) can be hyper-(over) or hypo-(under) sensitive.

Children actively seek out activities that provide sensory stimulus, these activities vary according to which sense is over- or under- sensitive

www.fledglings.org.uk

Sensory Integration



When faced with overwhelming sensory input a person can become stressed or anxious. This can lead to a meltdown and the possibility of other behaviours. When looking at someone's sensory challenges it is always recommended to consult an Occupational Therapist.

Most of us process information without having to think about it or even be aware of it. We also have internal senses.

Vestibular - sense of balance and movement it tells us where our body is in relation to the ground.

Proprioception - sense of body awareness and position, telling us if we are moving, how fast and in what direction.



• **Vestibular**

Under Sensitive - include;

- Swinging, rocking or spinning to stimulate sensory input.

How to Help - Activities that can help include using swings, seesaws and roundabouts.

Over Sensitive - include;

- Finding it difficult to play sport where movements need to be controlled.

- Finding it difficult to carry out activities when the head is not upright or feet are off the ground.

How to Help - Breaking down activities into more manageable steps.

• **Proprioception**

Under Sensitive - include;

- Being unable to understand/judge personal space.

- May be prone to bumping into objects.

How to Help - Positioning furniture to make it easier to get through a room.

Teaching the person to stand at arm's length.

Over Sensitive - include;

- Having difficulty with fine motor skills

- Moving the entire body to look at something.

How to Help - Introduce fine motor activities. Sorting small items, lacing, zipping, buttoning.



• **Sight**

Under Sensitive - include;

- Poor depth of perception, problems judging steps, throwing and catching.
- Peripheral vision good but blurred central vision.

How to Help - Coloured lenses and visual supports.

Over Sensitive - include;

- Distorted vision - bright lights can seem to jump around.
- Easier to focus on specific detail than broader image.
- Difficulty sleeping due to light sensitivity.

How to Help - Making changes to the environment, reduction of fluorescent lights, blackout curtains, creating a workspace with dividers to block out distractions.

• **Hearing**

Under Sensitive - include;

- May not notice some sounds.
- Could enjoy noisy, crowded places.

How to Help - Visual supports to accompany verbal communication. Try to include activities during the day that they enjoy so that sensory needs are met.

Over Sensitive - include;

- Unable to cut out background noise leading to reduced concentration.
- Noises can seem louder than they are.

How to Help - Reducing external sounds, closing doors and windows. Letting the person listen to white noise or quiet music.



• **Smell**

Under Sensitive - include;

- Some people have no sense of smell (including their own odour).
- Some people may lick objects for sensory input.

How to Help - Create routines around washing. Use strong smelling products to distract people from smelling inappropriate items.

Over Sensitive - include;

- Smells can be too strong. People can dislike certain shampoos, soaps, perfumes etc.

How to Help - Unscented household products, body care products and avoid strong fragrances such as spicy food.





• **Taste**

Under Sensitive - include;

- Enjoys spicy foods.
- Mouths or eats non-edible items, soil, grass. This behaviour is known as PICA. Reasons for PICA can be medical, dietary behavioural or sensory.

How to Help - People can limit themselves to spicy foods.

Over Sensitive - include;

- Some foods are too strong tasting.
- May only eat certain textures of food.

How to Help - People can limit themselves to bland foods. There is no problem with this if they have a varied diet. If in doubt consult a dietician.

www.autism.org.uk/about/health/eating

Information and links;

National Autism Society

www.autism.org.uk/about/behaviour/sensory-world

Challenging Behaviour Foundation

www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk

T: 01799 541807

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• **Touch**

Under Sensitive - include;

- Having a high pain threshold.
- May self-harm.
- Enjoy putting heavy object on their lap.
- Chews non-edible items.

How to Help - Weighted products, blankets, lap pads etc. Offer safe chewing aids.

Over Sensitive - include;

- Does not like wearing socks and shoes.
- Intolerant of certain types of clothing or materials.
- May find touch painful.

How to Help - Remove tags, turn clothing inside out, gradually introduce different soft textures.



Fledglings has a good range of sensory products available at reasonable prices.

Our helpline staff will be happy to help if you have any queries.