

Neurodivergency and sensory processing: experience our world



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“I turn the radio off in the car so I can see better”

“I feel so much better when someone has given me a big squish”

“I can’t concentrate on my book without music. Silence is too loud”

“Playing with blu tack makes me think harder”



“I can’t taste anything I’m too hot”

“Wet socks are a day ruiner you’re telling me I have to pretend I don’t have squelchy toes?”

“I can’t fully relax when I come home until I take my earrings off”



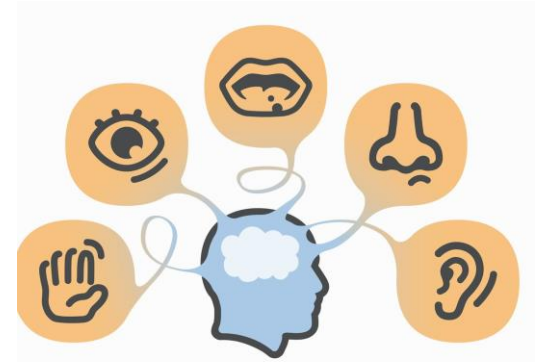
During this workshop we will:

- Explore how neurodivergency can affect a child's experience of sensory processing.
- Have an immersive experience to truly understand what sensory overload can feel like.
- Explore the anatomy of the brain
- Identify sensory seeking and avoiding behaviours



Sensory Processing Differences

- **Neurodivergence can affect the 5 basic senses**
(hearing, vision, touch, taste, smell)
- **Proprioception**
Feelings in the body, where the body is in relation to other objects, where parts of the body are in relation to the whole, and how different parts of the body move and feel
- **Interoception**
Awareness of what is happening inside the body (hunger, thirst, tiredness, pain)
- **Alexithymia**
Difficulty describing feelings



Sensory Processing Differences

- **Hyporesponsiveness** (Hyposensitive): less aware and reactive to sensory input
- **Hyperresponsiveness** (Hypersensitive): highly sensitive/responsive to sensory input
- **Sensory seeking**: a fascination with, or craving for, sensory stimuli (e.g. lights, loud music, textures, pressure)

(Feldman et al. 2018)



Immersive experience of sensory overload

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPknwW8mPAM>

(we will be giving a downloaded copy as well)

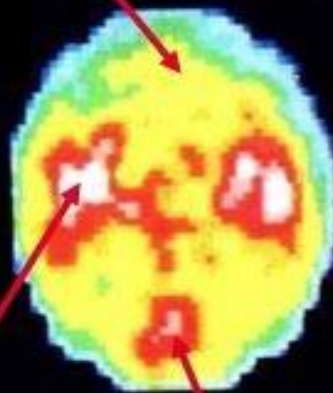
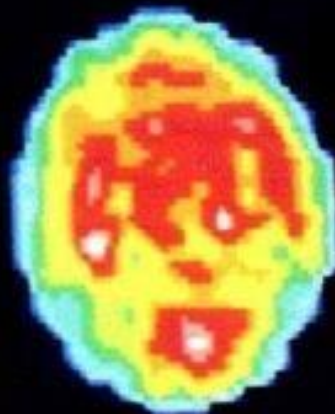
NAS, Youtube



Normal

ADHD

Frontal lobe ↓



Sensory-motor cortex ↑

Cerebellum ↓

Exercise 1: tune in

On your table are one of three physical environments.

Take moment to 'tune in' to your environment and identify parts of the environment that may be overwhelming for neurodivergent children and young people , e.g.:

- Noise
- Light
- Vibration
- Pattern
- Smell
- Touch/texture

Time available: 5 minutes



Environment 1: secondary school classroom



Environment 2: early years/primary school classroom



Environment 3: gym/community hall





AUTISM
AWARE STORE



LIDL ADVENTURERS

Find Your
Way Around!

- Additional assistance
- No announcements
- No music
- Reduced lighting

KEY:



May be loud



Cold

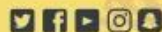


Strong smells



Do not touch!

ENTRANCE



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Sensory seekers are hyposensitive to sensory input

- Lack of personal space
- Unusual tolerance for pain.
- Loud, heavy steps.
- Enjoy physical contact including jumping, bumping, hopping and crashing into items (even if it is unsafe to do so)
- Unaware of strength (including fine motor control)
- Prefer “rough play”
- Touch textures/objects that interest them.
- Seek out or make loud noises
- Chew on non-food items.



Sensory avoiders are hypersensitive to sensory input

This may include:

- Sensitive to physical touch (especially gentle or sensitive touch)
- Be startled and frightened by unexpected sounds and bright lights.
- Hear background noises/vibrations others cannot.
- Avoid play where there is bodily contact
- Sensitivity to clothing texture, seams and tags
- Wary of activities that provide vestibular input (i.e. swings, kicking ball)
- Prefer to be in quiet environments and avoid crowds.



Sensory Supports

Neurodivergent people may make use of a variety of tools to help them with sensory processing, including:

- Noise cancelling headphones
- Fidget items
- Putty
- Tinted glasses
- Tactile objects
- Designated quiet areas



Activity 2: supporting sensory processing differences

On each of your table is a scenario of a child or young person who needs support with their sensory processing

1. Read the scenario on your table
2. Look at the items and visuals of items on your table
3. Suggest some solutions that would support the individual with their sensory seeking/avoidant behaviours

How does the additional information impact the suggestions you make?



I wiggle in my seat.

I seem to listen better when I am wiggling.

I am shy and easily embarrassed.



I love to eat crunchy objects and sometimes I even try to eat non food objects (sand, rocks).

I know that eating non-food items isnt good but I need to do it when I'm stressed, and sometimes I do it in secret



I walk on my tiptoes.

At home I love to rough play with my dad and love it when I can crash into the couch or floor from up high.

Help me find a way to know where my body is in space and feel grounded.



The seams on my jumper make me feel sick.
At home I like to be naked or wear big baggy
clothes.

All my friends wear their school uniform and I
can't bear to wear mine



Sometimes teachers make me sit at the window and I hate it.

I feel happiest in winter.

I keep being told to take my hood off but it helps me to see and listen better.



When I am stressed or excited I can't control the big noises that come out of my mouth.

I also make big noises with my body because it keeps me calm and tells the grown ups I am struggling.

My Mum says I'll be too big for soft play next year.



I love all different types of smells and I like to open things to see what they smell like.

My favourite smell is my Mum's hair and I get in trouble for smelling people's hair in the hall between classes.



I love to play and be outside, I don't like to stop playing ever and sometimes I have an accident.

I don't mean to have an accident and I don't like how it feels when it happens, but I never know when it's going to happen.

Last summer I had three bladder infections because I wasn't drinking enough, but I just don't feel thirsty.



Thank you!

Training topics we cover:

- Supporting children with additional support needs
- Relationships, sexual health and parenthood
- Bespoke training

