



Sensory Spectacle

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"Flourescent colours hurt my eyes. I have to wear sunglasses even on a cloudy day.

When I am driving I have the sun visor down because the sky is too bright, even when it's not sunny."

Anon

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@SensorySp

Our 8 senses

We are all aware that we have senses and can probably remember learning about them in school but we tend to only really think about 5.

When we are learning about how important our senses are for our development it is important we are aware of a few more than the original 5!

The 5 we learn about in school, smell, taste, touch, sight and hearing are known as our external senses as all the sensory information comes from outside our body and travels into our body.

There are 3 internal senses which are hugely important in our development, particularly when beginning to identify characteristics of SPD.

These are Proprioception (tells us where our body is from feedback from our joints & muscles), Vestibular (sense of movement in relation to gravity) and Interoception (internal feelings relating to hunger, temperature and toileting).

Resource Sheet

What is Sensory Processing Disorder?

Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) is when the brain finds it difficult to organise and respond to the sensory messages it receives from the sensory organs.

SPD affects 1 in 20, it doesn't only impact autistic people it can affect anyone. SPD is a neurological disorder as it affects the way the brain processes information.

Sensory processing happens in 2 stages. The first is the reception/sensation received by the sensory system (e.g the eye, ear, skin) the second stage is the perception and processing of that sensation by the brain. SPD does not mean the sensory organ is impaired, this is usually working perfectly well - it relates to the second stage - that of perception and processing.

Sensory differences are now (since 2014) included in diagnosing autism. Research says that over 75% of autistic people have SPD. We also know that SPD is familiar with ADHD, Fragile X, Epilepsy, Dyspraxia, learning difficulties and many other diagnosis'.

All our work is based on people who have SPD and share their experiences with us. SPD is unique for each person.

How to identify characteristics to SPD

The way we respond to our surroundings gives our friends and families a clue as to what we are feeling and thinking. For example if music is playing really loudly in the cafe I may put my fingers in my ears or speak louder to compensate for this.

People with SPD will be constantly finding ways to support themselves in the environments they are in in very much the same way. It is important we can understand these characteristics (learn more on our FEEL IT workshop). SPD can mean that someone may be processing too much (hyper) or not enough (hypo) sensations. *(There are other ways SPD can impact someone, these relate to motor-based difficulties and discrimination of sensory information.)*

Some characteristics for hyper sensitivities can be covering ears, covering eyes, gagging, withdrawing from hugs, eating bland food or reluctant to join activities.

Some characteristics for hypo sensitivities can be seeking vibration, loving shadows, licking things, biting, eating strong flavours or walking on tiptoes.

These characteristics are not all of the ways someone with a SPD might regulate their sensory needs it is just 1 example from each sensory system.

For more information see our 'guides' on our website shop, arrange an in-house experience workshop, attend one of our pre-planned workshop or see our FREE YouTube videos.
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