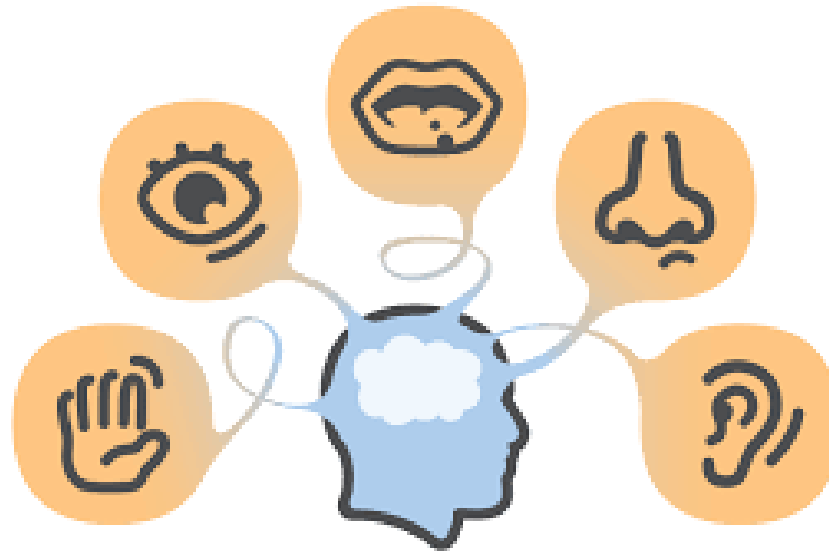


Sensory Needs

Developing a personalised Sensory Diet to support an individual child/young person.



Our Senses

- Sight
- Hearing
- Touch
- Smell
- Taste
- Vestibular – balance
- Proprioception – body awareness



Sensory integration is the process by which the brain organises and filters all the information received from the senses.

Sensations received by the brain help form behaviours, perception and learning—like a policeman controlling traffic.

When the traffic flow becomes jammed, disorganised, or overflowing, the brain can experience stress rather like that of being in constant rush hour!

Sensory Integration Dysfunction

If there is incorrect or inefficient sensory processing, sensory integration dysfunction may occur, resulting in difficulties that may affect a child's development and availability for learning. They may feel uncomfortable, their attention and focus may be difficult to maintain, it may be hard to cope with the demands made by other people.

If someone is having difficulties with sensory processing and sensory integration, we may see:

A child who avoids moving, climbing, swinging or sliding

A child who doesn't like to be touched by others

A child who refuses to engage in messy play

A child who appears constantly anxious

A child who is half asleep, needs to be prompted to engage in a task

A child who puts their hands over their ears and complains of noise

A child who becomes easily overly excited

A rigid, stiff and tense child

A child who always has to touch objects, people, constantly fiddles with things

A child who can't sit still and constantly fidgets

A child who likes to run and run.

Sensory integration dysfunction simply means that the brain is not processing, filtering and using sensory input in an efficient manner. This results in the individual receiving confused & muddled information about their body and the world around them.

At Riverside..

WHY?

- To support children with obvious sensory imbalances e.g. a child who may rock, or jump repeatedly or find it difficult to remain calm & focus on an activity.
- To manage anxiety levels & certain behaviour traits.
- 'Child A's autism and sensory disorder acts as a barrier to his learning & drives many challenging behaviours'. *EHCP 09.09.2015*
- To facilitate sensory processing and to allow each individual to be in the optimum state of alertness, ready for learning.

HOW?

- **By creating a personalised Sensory Diet – A planned and scheduled activity programme designed to meet a child's specific sensory needs.**
- **Individuals who struggle to process sensory information may display disruptive behaviour and attain lower academically. Focus needs to be given to strategies which address sensory imbalances.**

WHEN?

- AM-PM to support their daily routine.
- To recognise & support any warning signs and implement coping strategies where also needed.

The wonderful extra complexities ..



When Creating a Sensory Diet..

- Families
- Occupational Therapists
- Physiotherapy Service
- Class Team
- Speech and Language Therapist
- EHCP process
- Wider Leadership Team
- Engagement Profiles & PLPs
- The pupil; through responses seen during observations.



OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
SENSORY INTEGRATION

ACTIVITIES



Keep In Mind..

- A child who has difficulty organising and making sense of sensations may well have difficulty learning in the classroom; feel tired, anxious, struggle to remember instructions or pay attention in a busy room, may be fidgety, easy to anger or withdraw.
- A child's reaction/behaviour may often be an automatic response to sensations which their brain can not tolerate; messy play, noise, lights, light touch.
- **When planning the daily timetable we take into account individual sensory needs.**
- As adults we still use sensory motor experiences to help us to be more appropriately alert to the task in hand, often referred to as habits. We may fiddle with jewelry, tap a pen, bounce one leg whilst sitting cross legged. We have our own sensory motor quirks; preferences for personal space, drinks at certain temperatures, pull our sleeves into the preferred position on our arms, put on creams or lotions, stroke pets, go to the gym. We are simply more subtle and appropriate with our choices.
- **It is important to consider the sensory need of any behavior and to not try and take away a strategy without having something else to replace it with e.g. stop sucking thumb/start chewing end of their sleeve. Ask yourself, what strategy are they using? what sensory experience are they seeking? Is it working, are they on task? Does it need to be changed?**



Case Study

- Individuals with neurological damage or deficit have difficulties with sensory processing. Many Occupational Therapists use sensory integration interventions with individuals with Cerebral Palsy, Fragile X Syndrome, Visual Impairment, Down Syndrome, Attention Deficit Disorder and Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Sensory Processing and sensory Integration difficulties may contribute to such an individuals difficulty in engaging in normal activities of daily living, such as getting dressed, social interaction, academic achievement and behaviour.
- ‘Brian is 9 years old. He is autistic and has severe learning disabilities. He is extremely noise sensitive and may engage in self harming behaviours and aggressive outbursts. On starting the sensory Circuit each morning Brian, within a short period of time, can be observed removing his fingers from his ears while balancing on an exercise ball, making eye contact and being fully engaged with his teaching assistant. He, while bouncing on a trampette, or spinning in an office chair, appears alert and engaged, and smiles and giggles, obviously having fun. Within the classroom setting, before circuits commenced at his school, Brian sat with his fingers in his ears, making little eye contact, and was difficult to engage. Sensory Circuits appear to have helped him decrease some sensory sensitivities and re – engage with the people around him and his environment’.

Sensory Circuits

Sensory circuits involve 3 types of activities; when used in order they can be effective in supporting individuals to improve their levels of attention and focus. They can help to tackle sensory imbalances & support those with lots of energy to enable them to redirect it positively.

Alerting – to provide vestibular stimulation; preparing the brain for learning & for the demands of the school environment e.g. skipping, run, jumping jacks.

Organising – sorting and preparing the body and brain, providing situations to increase focus, attention span & performance; activities that require multi-sensory processing & balance e.g. climbing, balancing, throwing into a target, scooting.

Calming – Very important; to ensure they are calm and centered and ready to learn. e.g. press ups, ball squash, deep hand pressure, bear hug while wrapped tightly in a blanket.

- Sensory Circuits are an example of a sensory integration intervention they can be used to help those who struggle to process and appropriately use sensory information, consequently Sensory Circuits may facilitate engagement for learning.
- Along side implementing a Sensory Circuit, we must note other factors that impact; engagement for learning can be effected by how exciting the activity is, the adults enthusiasm , the support and use of visual & communication aids.

Ideas of activities to include in a sensory circuit..

- **Alert;** Trampoline, bouncing on an exercise ball, running or a brisk walk, Jumping Jacks.
- **Organise;** Balance beam, Stepping Stones, crawling through tunnels, balancing on a wobble board, Simon Says, using a scooter, throwing bean bags at a target, posting items, shape sorters.
- **Calm;** ball squash, steam roller, pressure e.g. weighted blankets, wall press ups, material tunnels, head massages, deep pressure massage.

To run a successful Sensory Circuit..

- Have all the equipment ready for all three parts before you begin.
- **Make a list for yourself of the correct order of activities.**
- Ideally at 5 minutes for each stage, you can include a couple of activities from each stage.
- **Include activities that will aim to restore their sensory balance, not overload them!**
- Some individuals may need to spend more time in the alerting activities & a considerable amount of time in the calming section to be as calm, organised and as ready for learning as possible.
- **Provide a clear structure to limit chaos. Often a child tries to cope with chaos created by confusion, by creating his or her own predictability; rocking/pacing/stimming.**

Things to include in a Sensory Diet; **Feed the Need!**

There are times when sensory seeking behaviours may not provide the most organising, calming or socially acceptable input. It is then appropriate to redirect behaviour, we always try to provide the appropriate input in the most socially acceptable manner.

- **Alerting techniques:** Alerting experiences can help a child who is under reactive to sensory input, passive or lethargic become more focused and attentive:

Bright lighting and fresh cool air, Fast swinging, quick unpredictable movement, drinking ice water, sucking ice cubes, cold water play, running tag games, cause and effect toys with sounds and lights, fast music and sudden noises, strong odours.

- **Organising Techniques:** Organising experiences can help a child who is either over or under active become more focused and attentive:

Chewing celery, sucking hard candy, using curly straws, blowing, vibration, using a vibrating pillow, vibrating wiggle pen, toy massager, swimming, proprioceptive activities especially hanging, pushing, pulling or lifting heavy objects.

- **Calming Techniques:** Deep pressure massage/ ball pools can help to calm its thought as they supply the comfort of pressure, which children with ASD may struggle to get from other people. Carrying objects in the palm of hands can also reduce levels of arousal.

Sensory Diet; the possible outcomes?



- **A personalised approach, used consistently with clear strategies**
- **A Sensory diet produced to complement a child/young persons daily routine.**
- **A Sensory Circuit Programme**
- **Staff and family feel more confident and in control**
- **Development of a child's physical skills; learn to jump, balance, throw at a specific target.**
- **Appearing to be more engaged in groups of pupils and actively seeking to be involved.**
- **Approaching staff/family for positive reasons; actively communicating for a chase game.**
- **An improvement in focus and attention and an improved ability to settle down to an activity.**
- **Showing achievement and progress in new areas (opportunities to engage in specific learning whilst taking part in physical activities) e.g. counting whilst bouncing on the trampoline, swimming to find coloured hoops, dressing skills.**
- **Exhibiting less challenging behaviour/replacing negative behaviors for more appropriate ones.**
- **Improvements at home; settling for bed more easily, and sleeping for longer periods of time.**
- **Improved communication skills; signing more, vocalising a consistent sound for yes during physical activities.**

Sensory Diet; An Example..

- 7am – Trampoline bounce or quick run
- 7.10am-Thick Milkshake through a curly straw
- 7.20am –Warm bath & Scrub
- 7.40am – Getting dressed
- 7.50am – Breakfast (crunchy cereal and cold milk)
- 8.10am- Playing with a vibrating toy or a shape sorter
- 8.20am- Deep massage or tight hug in a blanket
- 8.30am-On the bus
- 9am-Straight off the bus, Alerting activity; run round the playground 3 times & quick swing
- Organising activity; Turn on the iJoy and posting activity
- Calming activity; Sensory Massage Story
- 9.40am - Class Activity (whilst eating celery/holding therapy putty)

Final Thoughts..

Child centered and personalised is best

The first diet might not be the right diet

Keep communicating, observing & recording

Visual supports are a necessity

It may not be stimulation itself that is painful but rather its unpredictability and uncontrollability

As our knowledge of the brain and the central nervous system develops, we have begun to recognise that the brain favours repetition and that physical activity plays an important part in our development.

The consistent structure of the diet ensures predictable sensory input whilst building up skills by doing something again and again. It will not happen over night. Repetition is important!

