

Sensory Integration Therapy

Sensory integration is the brain's ability to take in, process, and organize the information provided by all the sensations coming from within the body and from the external environment. This is how we perceive our surroundings and the people and physical objects in it, how we relate our body to them, as well as how they relate to each other. Because our brain uses information about sights, sounds, textures, smells, tastes, and movement in an organized way, we assign meaning to our sensory experiences, and know how to respond accordingly.

For children with sensory integration dysfunction, their neurological system is unable to appropriately manage input from the senses, making it difficult to figure out what is going on inside and outside their bodies. As a result, a child may avoid confusing or distressing sensations, or seek out more of the sensation to find out more about it. Because they cannot rely on their senses to give them an accurate picture of the world, they are unsure how to respond, and may have trouble learning and behaving appropriately.

Some indications of a possible sensory integration/processing disorder include:

Oversensitivity or undersensitivity to touch Avoids being touched, refuses to wear certain clothing *or* crashes into people/things, prefers hot bath water, high pain tolerance.

Underreactive or overreactive to movement sensations Seeks out movement like swinging, twirling, jumping, *or* is fearful of movement, avoids active games, gets dizzy very easily.

Auditory sensitivity Excessively strong *or* virtually no response to loud or unusual noises, unusually high or low voice volume, easily distracted around a lot of noise.

Unusually high or low activity level Constantly on the move *or* moves slowly and tires easily.

Taste and smell sensitivity Is a "picky eater:" limited repertoire of acceptable foods, difficulty tolerating various food textures, gags easily, craves spicy foods, offended by certain smells.

Sensory integration therapy looks like play. For example, you may see your child swinging (vestibular sense), pulling a rope to speed up the swing (proprioceptive sense), catching fidget toys (tactile sense), and throwing them in a bucket (visual sense), all while wearing a pair of headphones (auditory sense). The idea of SI therapy is to employ carefully selected therapeutic sensory experiences and physical interaction to enhance sensory integration in order to improve learning, behavior, and quality of life.

For more information about sensory integration therapy and how it may benefit your child, we invite you to contact us by phone at (248) 737-3430, via e-mail at jessicah@kidspeech.com, or visit our website at kidspeech.com.