

Sensory Solutions Quiz

The first step in helping your child (or yourself) with sensory issues is to identify where your child sensory seeking and where your child is sensory avoiding.

Often a child will be seeking in one area and avoiding in another, but sometimes they are all-around seeking, or all-around avoiding. With this knowledge, you can then look for ways to provide a sensory diet for them to help them regulate themselves.

SENSORY SEEKING BEHAVIOR

VISUAL:

- Likes contrast (black and white patterns) and bright colors
- Enjoys strobe lights, flashlights
- May fixate on lights or windows
- Dislikes dark
- Becomes restless in 'adult' spaces such as an adult dentist waiting room or lobby to a hotel
- Stims may include watching reflections of bright light, turning lights off and on.

AUDITORY:

- Enjoys loud music
- May talk 'too loud'
- Doesn't mind the radio or TV on as background noise
- Lots of noise made during play
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TACTILE:

- Runs hands down walls
- Enjoys tight hugs
- Likes sleeping under heavy blankets
- Enjoys swinging fast, sliding fast, other fast/rough play at the playground
- Jumps and runs when not appropriate
- Seems to 'crash' into walls often (not a balance issue)
- Enjoys finger painting, playing in sand box, being barefoot
- May be particular about clothes but prefers them to be snug.
Oten prefers wearing jeans instead of leggings or sweat pants.

DIRECTIONS: Mark off each behavior or preference that is true for your child. The sections that have the most check marks are the sections that are most true for your child.

WHAT TO DO WITH THE

RESULTS:

With your child's sensory needs known, you can now follow the sensory tips to meet their sensory needs.

When sensory needs are met your child will be less overwhelmed, more compliant, and more likely to try new foods!

SKEPTICAL? Give the sensory diet a try with an open mind for just a day or two. It works wonders! Remember, this is a need for your child, not a preference. Thankfully as the microbiome becomes balanced and more nutrients are consumed, your child can 'heal' much of this sensory dysregulation.

SENSORY AVOIDING BEHAVIOR

VISUAL:

- Shields eyes from the sun.
- Covers eyes or buries face into blankets or walls when upset.
- Dislikes bright lights, fluorescent lights, flickering
- Dislikes contrast (reading requires a lot of contrast - black and white on the page)
- Overwhelmed in brightly lit colorful places (kid gyms, Target or Walmart, 'fun' kid-centered waiting rooms)

AUDITORY:

- Covers ears with hoods, hats more often than needed for weather.
- Shields ears when upset with hands, or buries into pillows/blankets.
- Dislikes appliances running (vacuum, dryer, air conditioning).
- Is easily distracted by the radio, TV, outside noises.
- Favorite people may be soft spoken or avoid over explaining (this can be a verbal processing issue too, not just sensory).

TACTILE:

- Does not like to touch sand/grass with bare feet.
- Particular about how clothing fits (socks lining up, undies not being too tight).
- Prefers elastic waistbands to jeans.
- Irritated by tags in shirts.
- Does not enjoy sand play, finger painting.
- May be very 'clean' while they eat, learning to use utensils early, not getting hands messy if possible.
- Prefers smooth foods to crunchy.
- Shies away from hugs and rough play.
- Prefers not to sleep under heavy blankets, may prefer to sleep in a warmer room so they can use less blankets.
- Dislikes swinging fast or other fast motor activities. May seem overly fearful of things like riding bikes or going on the swings.

RECORD YOUR ANSWERS

Your child may be completely sensory seeking in all areas or sensory avoiding in all areas, but it is more common to have some areas of seeking and some of avoiding

List what areas have the most filled in bubbles here:

Extras: Sensory Solutions for Picky Eating

When you want to put your child on a specific healing diet, picky eating is even more overwhelming. Many parents start this Picky Eating Solution course with the end goal of putting their child on a healing diet such as GAPS, SCD or Keto.

Wouldn't it work to just not give in?

Nope. It's not a discipline issue, it's a sensory issue. This advice might have worked for well meaning grandparents with typically developing children, but with extremely picky kids this is a sensory issue – and they literally will starve themselves to the point of harm rather than eat a food they don't find suitable.

It's the bacteria talking

In the webinar we talked about how bad gut flora can give off toxins that affect our brains like drugs. That's what this sensitivity to textures and tastes is all about, in the same way our body tells us to avoid bitter foods because they likely are poisonous our kids with sensory issues are being 'told' that this food is not good to eat. That's what makes picky eaters when it comes to sensory issues.

Give it just 7 days

The good thing

about it being a gut flora issue is that it's generally easily corrected! After just a week on the gut-balancing diet, or even gluten free, many kids are eating many more foods.

I commonly get emails from parents that tell me that after a week after limiting foods, their 4 year old is happily eating tons of squash, soup, meat, and eggs- all foods that had been disliked in the past.

For the 3-7 days that you're starting the diet, I wouldn't worry about anything other than only limiting your child to GAPS approved foods. Even if they will only eat apple sauce for days, this often starves out enough of the bad gut flora that they can then tolerate more acceptable foods.

Your job during this time is to make sure they're not getting any cheats at all- even a crumb of bread or couple grains of rice at this stage will feed the bad gut flora and prevent them

from dying off, and all your hard work will be negated.

Watch for sugar or additives in supplements, and get different versions if they have offending ingredients.

Healing diets, especially in the beginning, isn't something you can do 80% or even 99%, it requires 100% adherence to be successful. After the gut has healed quite a bit (this was after about a year for us) occasional cheats won't mess the gut up so much, but at the beginning it's mandatory to be strict.

Sensory Integration

Sensory kids (adults can fall into this category too) don't process sensations like taste or texture, or sight, touch, or sound, like the rest of us do. These children are overwhelmed (or, equally disruptive, underwhelmed) by the day-to-day sensations that keep the rest of us regulated.

WHAT ARE SENSORY ISSUES?

SENSORY ISSUES ARE NORMAL DAY-TO-DAY SENSATIONS THAT CAUSE DISTRESS TO OUR CHILDREN.

Think about rubbing sandpaper on your skin, hearing a air horn blasting over and over, or looking directly at a bright flashing light for minutes at a time. These are all sensations you would avoid, right?

With children with sensory-avoidance tendencies, this is how their brain is interpreting normal every day sensations such as wearing jeans or canvas pants, the radio playing in the car, or the stark contrast of black words on a white page.

It's becoming more common As I've been involved with other families and the school system, I've seen that sensory issues are very common, even if the children are not

on the autism spectrum.

Based on the teachers and childcare workers that I have talked to, sensory issues are on the rise, especially in this current generation of children. They tell me that where they used to have 1 or 2 children in their class that were over or under sensitive, now it's at least half the class and often more.

More and more kids are not responding typically to the sensations of:

- Sight
- Sound
- Touch
- Textures
- Tastes
- And more.

It's not a consistency or parenting problem Let's explore the child who can't handle typical errands due them being visually avoidant.

This child can't tune out the brightly colored detergent containers, the slight flicker from the fluorescent lights, the bright shopping carts, and the constant unpredictable movement from everyone around them.

A trip through Target is the equivalent trying to get the shopping done with a strobe light flashing different colors right in their peripheral vision the whole trip. This would make anyone cranky, and exposure on a daily or weekly basis really wouldn't help much.

So, no, they can't just "get used to it."

Simple Sensory Solutions for a Well-Regulated Child

Normal Sensory Preferences Sensory seeking behaviors

We all have sensory preferences such as:

- Preferring a calm minimally decorated home vs bold colors and big prints on the walls.
- Crunchy or chewy foods like chips or taffy vs smooth soft foods like ice cream.
- Tight stiff jeans vs loose flowy dresses.
- Background or 'white' noise vs silence.
- Scented vs unscented cleaning products.
- And more.

Little things like this are okay, *it's when it starts impacting daily living, or the quality of a person's life and their ability to do the things that they want to do that it becomes a problem.*

Do you know how you are itching to go run and jump after being in the car for a long time?

Have you ever heard someone say, "I can't think, it's just too quiet in here?"

Do you move into a rental with white walls and tan carpet and have the immediate urge to put up posters, paint the walls, and add some colorful throw rugs?

These are all normal sensory cravings. Our 'system' is balanced by visual input, tactile input, and auditory input that we get in our normal every day lives by working, playing, eating, breathing, etc.

When children are sensory seekers they are not feeling balanced by normal sensory input that they get from everyday living activities. If

they are auditory seeking, they may listen to the TV 'too loud', constantly be crashing into things, or making noise all the time.

It's not because they're trying to annoy you, it's because they feel disregulated and they're trying to get the input they need to be calm.

There are solutions!

As parents, once we figure out the sensory piece of the puzzle with our children and can provide a sensory diet that they need, we are often amazed at how...

... Meltdowns are greatly reduced

..... Irritating behaviors stop

.... Our children are better able to concentrate on both learning and play

..... Interactions with others are a positive experience.

Providing what these children need can prevent meltdowns in the first place

Simple Sensory Solutions for a Well-Regulated Child

Once you know what areas your child is avoiding or craving sensory input, it's easy to be mindful of the children's needs, and provide them sensations that they seek or a refuge from sensations they avoid before they head into meltdown mode, or appear 'hyperactive' because they are sensation seeking.

Here are a few solutions that I use in my family:

Heavy work balances the sensory system for nearly every child.

Heavy work can include: Shoveling snow, moving or digging in sand, bringing in groceries, playing with canned food, and really anything that the child has to push, pull, or lift.

Tactile seeking: High impact exercise – running rather than biking.

Tactile seeking: Tight hugs.

Visually avoiding: Limit errands to one or two a day.

Visually avoiding: Cover book pages with a colored plastic sheet to minimize contrast.

Auditory seeking: Take children to the race track, request that they vacuum for me, provide cap guns.

Once you notice patterns in family members and are able to provide simple accommodations, you will notice a positive change in your entire family dynamic.