

Some Signs of Dysfunction of Sensory Integration

- Overly sensitive to touch, movement, sights or sounds
- Easily Distracted
- Activity level that is unusually high or low
- Impulsive, lacking in self-control
- Poor self concept, body awareness
- Under reactive to touch, movement, sights or sounds
- Social and or emotional problems
- Physical clumsiness or apparent carelessness
- Difficulty making transitions from one situation to another
- Delays in speech, language or motor skills
- Delays in academic achievement

What is Sensory Integration?

Sensory experiences include touch, movement, body awareness, sight, sound, and the pull of gravity. The process of the brain organizing and interpreting this information is called sensory integration. Sensory integration provides a crucial foundation for later, more complex learning and behavior.

For most children, sensory integration develops in the course of ordinary childhood activities. Motor planning ability is a natural outcome of the process, as is the ability to adapt to incoming sensations. But for some children, sensory integration does not develop as efficiently as it should. When the process is disordered, a number of problems in learning, development, or behavior may become evident.

The concept of sensory integration comes from a body of work developed by A. Jean Ayres, PhD., OTR/L. As an occupational therapist, Dr. Ayres was interested in the way in which sensory processing and motor planning disorders interfere with daily life function and learning. This theory has been developed and refined by the research of Dr. Ayres, as well as other occupational and physical therapists. In addition, literature from the fields of neurology, neuropsychology, physiology, child development and psychology has contributed to theory development and intervention strategies.

What Can Be Done?

If a child is suspected of having a sensory integrative disorder, an evaluation can be conducted by a qualified occupational or physical therapist. Evaluation may consist of standardized testing as well as structured observations of responses to sensory stimulation, posture, balance, coordination and eye movements. After carefully analyzing test results and other assessment data along with information from other professionals and parents, the therapist will make recommendations regarding appropriate therapy.

If therapy is recommended, the child will be guided through activities that challenge his/her ability to respond appropriately to sensory input by making a successful, organized response. One important aspect of therapy that uses a sensory integrative approach is that the motivation of the child plays a crucial role in the selection of activities. Most children tend to seek out activities that provide sensory experiences most beneficial to them at that point in development. It is this active involvement and exploration that enables the child to become a more mature, efficient organizer of

sensory information.

Where to Learn More

The most important step in promoting sensory integration in children is to recognize that it exists and that it plays an important role in the development of the child. By learning more about sensory integration, parents, educators and care-givers can provide an enriched environment that will foster healthy growth and maturation. For more information: Read

- A Parent's Guide to Understanding Sensory Integration; Sensory Integration International (1986)
- Sensory Integration and the Child; by A. Jean Ayres Los Angeles: Western Psychological Services (1979)

The Out Of Sync Child, by Carol Kranowitz

-Sensibilities: Understanding Sensory Integration; by Maryann Colby Trott, Marci K. Laurel & Susan L. Windeck

-Unlocking the Mysteries of Sensory Integration Dysfunction; by Elizabeth Anderson & Pauline Emmons

What are some good resources?

"The Out-of-Sync Child" by Carol Kranowitz

"The Out-of-Sync Child Has Fun" by Carol Kranowitz

"101 Activities for Kids in Tight Spaces" by Carol Kranowitz

"The Goodenoughs Get In Sync" by Carol Kranowitz

"Raising a Sensory Smart Child" by Lindsey Biel and Nancy Peske

"Sensational Kids" by Lucy Miller

"Smart Moves – Why Learning Is Not All In Your Head" by Carol Hannaford Ph.D

"Why Motor Skills Matter" by Tara Losquadro Liddle, MPT

"Positive Discipline" by Jane Nelson

"Toolbox for Parents" by Diana Henry

"Toolbox for Teens" by Diana Henry

"Take Five, Staying Alert at Home and School" by Mary Sue Williams and Sherry Shellenburger

"How Does Your Engine Run?" by Mary Sue Williams and Sherry Shellenburger

"Teaching Your Children Values" by Linda and Richard Eyre

Websites are provided in the sensory integration section