

SENSORY PROCESSING

Sensory processing refers to the way the nervous system receives information from the senses and turns these messages into motor and behavioural responses. In order to successfully complete any activity, processing of many different sensations is required.



THE 8 SENSES

Taste

Sight

Smell

Hearing

Touch

Proprioception - awareness of body position and strength to complete tasks

Vestibular - sense of balance and body orientation

Interoception - awareness of internal sensations



CHALLENGES IN SENSORY PROCESSING

Sensory processing difficulties are not an obvious challenge. These children are often labeled clumsy, uncooperative, hyper, out of control, lazy or disruptive.

Individuals with sensory processing challenges may have difficulties with one sense, such as touch, or with multiple senses. Challenges can be in over or under responding to input.

Example: A child who is under responding to input from the muscles and joints will typically present with poor posture and motor skills. As a result, this child may develop poor self-esteem, struggle academically and exhibit poor social-emotional skills due to their inability to "keep up" with peers.



It is difficult to process and act upon information received from the senses if these sensory signals cannot organize themselves into appropriate responses. This can create severe challenges in the completion of everyday tasks.

TREATMENT

Through therapy with an Occupational Therapist, with a sensory approach, a child with sensory processing difficulties learns alternate ways to process challenging information, and discover leisure and vocational activities to best suit their processing needs.



Challenges in sensory processing are often misdiagnosed as ADHD, and these children typically begin a medication regimen that is not meeting their needs.

There are striking parallels between the two, however there are also disparities. It is best to consult therapists who are knowledgeable with both sensory processing and ADHD.

If treatment is not received, these challenges can lead to clumsiness, behavioural problems, anxiety or depression.

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