

The KEYHOLE® Rainbow Resource Book 4



What do you mean by sensory?



Our sensory systems tell us about our body position, how we move, what we hear, see, smell, touch and taste. Most children with a diagnosis of Autism react to their surroundings in different ways because their sensory systems react differently.

Here are some behaviours that you might see from your child:



"Wheee...this is great! What do you mean dangerous? Look no hands!"

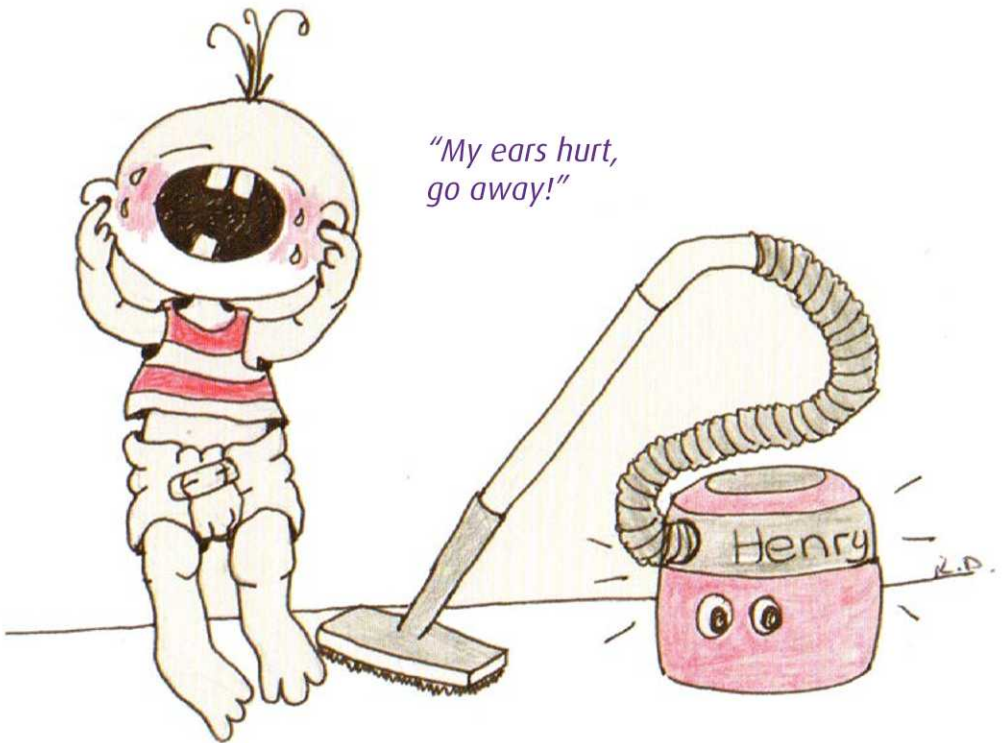
"Horrible hands - go away! Its SORE!"



Your child may be over sensitive to some sensations. This means that they may find just a small amount of sensation too much to cope with and may become over aroused or distressed.

- A lot of children will avoid the situation they find difficult or refuse to play.
- Some will go into what we could call 'shut down', by withdrawing into their own world or falling asleep.

This child in the picture below is showing difficulty with noise.



OVERSENSITIVE/UNDERSENSITIVE

- Your child may be both over sensitive and under sensitive at the same time e.g. they may be upset by the noise of the vacuum cleaner but at the same time appear not to notice when someone is speaking.
- Sometimes when a child is tired or upset, their tolerance for sensations may change due to their heightened emotions. For example, the woolly jumper that they accepted before is now impossible to wear.
- As your child grows and develops, their sensory needs can adapt and change.
- Your child's response to certain situations, their behaviour and their preferred play, will all help you build a sensory picture or 'profile'. This in turn may help you understand why they behave in a particular way. Using their sensory preferences can also help you tune in and connect with them during play.
- It may help to keep a diary where you can record how they behave in certain situations, what seems to trigger over arousal, what they like to eat and play with and what calms them.

UNDER SENSITIVE/HYPO SENSITIVE

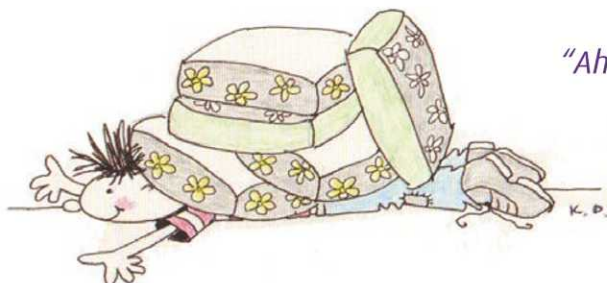
The following children are showing behaviours typical of under sensitivity.

- A child can seek out stimulation or have poor sensory feedback from muscles and joints, so can trip or bump.
- A lower amount of sensory information from muscles and joints means the child may not have a good sense of body awareness.
- They may trip and bump a lot, but it doesn't seem to bother them much.

"whoops...what happened to the chair?"

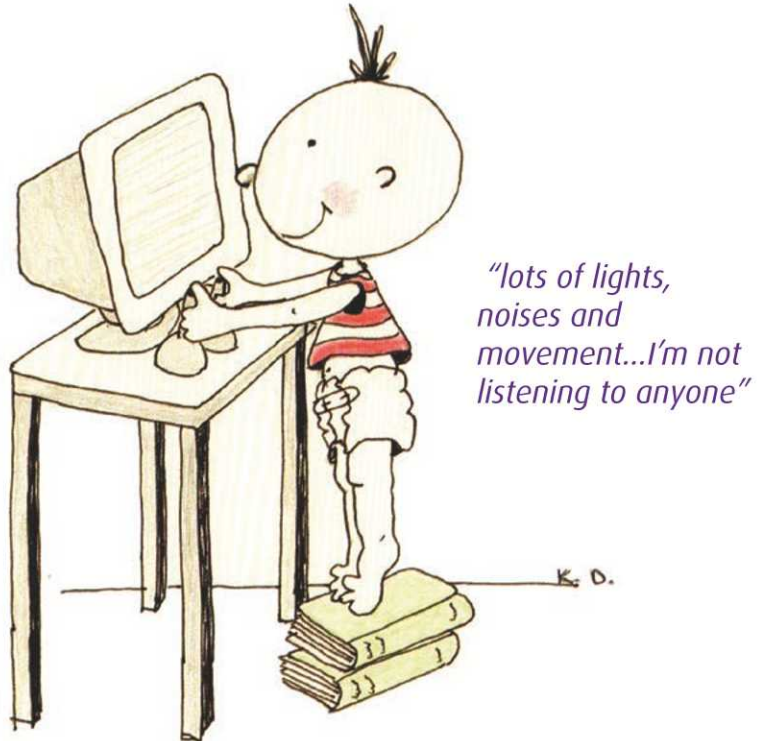


- Activities that involve rolling, crawling, jumping and wheelbarrow walking will help to develop their body awareness.
- Action games and songs are also helpful.
- The weight of cushions can help them to register better sensory information from their skin, muscles and joints.
- Making a 'mat sandwich' can help a child remain calm and connected.



"Ahhh..."

- They are seeking out visual stimulation, noise and vibration.
- They are totally absorbed in the stimulation of the screen.



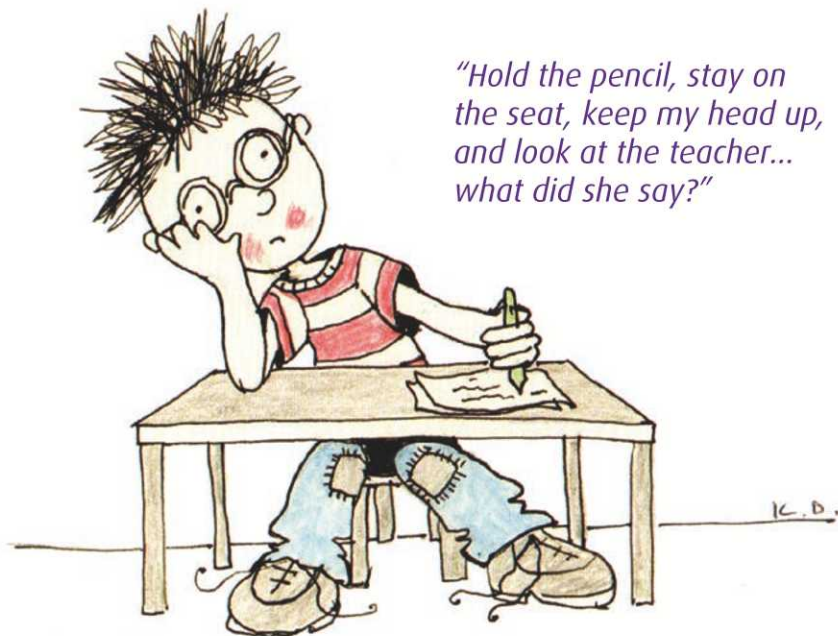
- Reduced feedback of information on their sensory system can make it difficult to organise movement.
- It is sometimes difficult to combine looking, balancing and moving.



- Help your child to build up their skills gradually. Break it down into simple steps.
- Provide lots of rough and tumble games, play on swings, slides and other movement games.
- The child may be rough with their toys if they are seeking sensory stimulation by hitting and crashing.
- They may be unsure of how to play a particular game so the game has little purpose.



- Provide activities such as hammering, sand and water play, pushing and pulling and ball play.
- Get down on the floor with your child and play together.
- Poor sensory processing may make it difficult to sit up, to listen and to attend. Low muscle tone can mean your child may slump when sitting or need more support (e.g. chair with armrests).

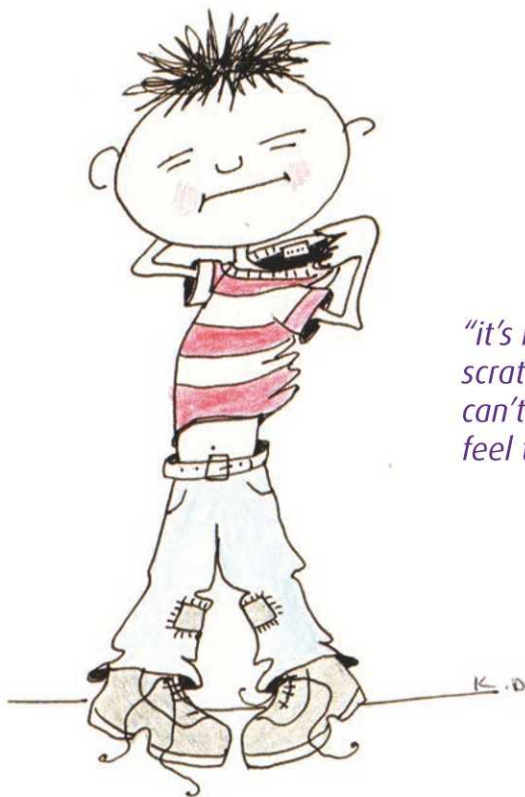


- Provide periods of movement to wake up the senses.
- Standing rather than sitting might help.

OVER SENSITIVITY/HYPER SENSIVITY

The following children are showing behaviours typical of over sensitivity.

- Noise, colour and movement easily arouse some children. The feel of labels on clothes or certain textures of food can be intolerable.
- A child may be over sensitive to touch. They find certain material and textures irritating.



- Remove labels. Try different materials e.g. cotton instead of wool.
- Try and build up tolerance by massaging and gently brushing arms and legs. Use a rough towel when drying after a bath.

- May be sensitive to texture, smell, taste or temperature.
- If your child is over sensitive to smell they may find perfume or aftershave unpleasant.



- Introduce new foods one at a time. Keep helpings small. Allow choice.

- They may find the stimulation of a supermarket too much as they can't filter out the noise, the music, the visual surroundings and the smells.



- Try shopping at a quiet time or in a smaller shop. Build up the time gradually. Go shopping on your own if you can.
- Prepare your child by showing them what you are doing on the shopping trip.
- Try using a distracter e.g. a favourite toy.

- They may be over sensitive to touch. It can feel painful or annoying.
- They may also find hair and nail cutting painful.
- Use firm pressure. Let them know they are going to be touched.

*"horrible
hands...go
away"*



- Prepare your child to participate in their routine, encouraging independence.
- Play a game that involves pretend washing, cutting etc.
- Please remember we all have sensory preferences and dislikes. However, children with Autism sense the world differently or much more extremely. This can affect how they behave, how they cope and function in the world around them.



Sensory Activities

■ Smelly Jars

Punch some holes in the lid of a small jar or plastic bottle. Fill with cotton wool scented with food essence or perfume. Make sure the lid is secure.

■ Touch wall

Cover a section of the wall with fine sand paper, bubble wrap, velvet, fun fur, cds or any safe material.

■ Feely Box

A large cardboard box filled with shredded paper. This could be lined with reflective paper or any other interesting safe material.

■ Magic Mud

Cornflour/Water/Food Colouring

Add just enough water to stir the cornflour, add food colouring.

■ Squishy Bag

3 cups of water/4 tablespoons cornflour/food colouring/snap or zip closed food bag

■ Thick Bubbles

2 ½ - 3 Parts water/ 1 part washing up liquid/ 1tbls glycerine.

This solution makes bubbles which are much stronger than ordinary bubble mixtures.

■ Hide and Find






Use rice, lentils, clean sand etc., to hide small toys. Let your child find the toys using one or two hands, eyes open or closed.

■ Tightrope walk

Use masking tape to mark a tightrope on the floor. Let your child try to walk along the line.

■ Individual Sensory Boxes

Use a variety of items to develop each individual sense, place in a box and let your child explore.

	Seeks Out	Draws Away From	Any Other Commitment
Smell 			
Taste 			
Touch 			
Hearing 			
Body Movement 			

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