

A Parent's Guide: For Sensory Seekers & Avoiders



What are sensory processing differences?

Sensory processing refers to how the brain interprets and responds to sensory input – it's how the brain interprets sensory information that we see, hear, touch, smell, and feel through movement or body position, leading to unique responses, behaviors or preferences.

Sensory Seekers

- Crave sensory input
- Often appear energetic, curious, or impulsive

Common traits:

- Constantly moving (running, jumping) climbing)
- Touching everything (textures, objects, people)
- Loud vocalizations or turning volume up on iPad, TV, or music
- May crash into people or things seeking additional input
- May stuff food in mouth, or sniff things



Sensory Support Tips:

- **Offer meaningful movement breaks:** going on a walk, swinging,
- **Be mindful:** Some movement can overstimulate instead of calm.
- **Lower noise volume:** Turn down the TV, get close and whisper in the child's ear instead of yelling, reduce background noise
- **Match strategies to sensory needs:** (banging head → try head squeezes)
- **Use calming input regularly** to help kids stay regulated throughout the day.



Tips for Communicating with Team Members:

- **Share sensory strategies that work**, and **train team members** on how to use those strategies well
- **Discuss any new sensory needs or concerns** you are seeing so they can be quickly addressed
- Be proactive instead of reactive
- **Stay flexible** and responsive to changing needs
- **Use sensory strategies regularly** to support regulation and learning
- **Keep learning new strategies** to expand your sensory support toolkit

Sensory Avoiders

- Sensitive to sensory input
- May appear overwhelmed or distressed with certain stimuli

Common Traits:

- Avoids new things
- Avoids new food and smells
- Gets upset with disruptions in routine
- Appears nervous or resistant to entering new or less familiar places
- May cover ears to dampen loud sounds
- May frequently undress due to sensitivity to clothing

Sensory Support Tips:

- **Create quiet spaces** for breaks to reduce overstimulation
- **Use noise-canceling headphones** when needed
- **Offer calming, hands-on sensory strategies**
- **Offer reassurance**, "That was loud", "I didn't like it either," "That scared me, too".
- **Let kids choose** clothing and food when possible
- **Use visual schedules** to ease transitions
- **Incorporate calming input** throughout the day—not just during sensory distress
- **Respect** communication: like "no," "don't like," or "worried", pushing something away "I can tell you don't like that".
- **Use social stories** to prepare for tough situations



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