

Disability Specific Learning Supports at Home for

Sensory Processing Disorder

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In a combined effort, this is a resource for parents who have children with sensory processing disorder. In this document we will discuss supporting families to help engage their children in daily routines, play, and learning in the home. Included will be some general recommendations on how to be successful in the home and some examples that can be done with children to help them with their sensory needs.

In order to have a better understanding of how to help children with sensory processing disorder we need to know some of the mannerisms and behaviors that are triggers for these children. This will help us to be better at helping them process and find solutions to these triggers before they have meltdowns.

Most of the time, the child is shown to have an unusual sensitivity to different common things, that is not a problem for most children their age. Sensory issues are separated into two different categories, hypersensitivity and hyposensitivity.

Hypersensitivity is best described as when the child is attempting to avoid sensory situations that cause them sensitivity. This is called sensory avoiding. Hyposensitivity is the opposite problem and it is when the child is undersensitive to stimuli and is seeking sensory input. This is called sensory seeking behavior. It is important to understand which side of the spectrum the child is on to help best provide activities for them.

Occasionally with sensory processing disorder, it may look like a behavior issue, but it is just the child expressing they feel overwhelmed and their sensory needs are not being met. If there is a time of the day where the child is melting down during a certain routine, reflect and see if this is triggering either their hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity. Some things to look for in hyposensitivity are, they are squirming and fidgeting, constantly moving, invading personal space, and constantly touching objects. Something to look

for in hypersensitivity, is being sensitive to clothing tags and textures, easily overwhelmed by people and places, extreme food aversion, and aversion to being touched. Now that we have a better understanding of different sensitivities and what to look for, here are some activities that you can do with your child to help them cope with daily routines and play throughout the day.

Sensory integration activities are very common in therapy sessions and in schools for children with sensory processing challenges, but sensory activities are beneficial to all children, not just the ones with sensory processing disorders. The sensory activities are good for all children and will help with their overall sensory development. I will be sharing with you a list of activities that you can implement at home using things you already have.

Heavy Work - Laundry Helper

Heavy work sounds a bit nerve wracking when you say it but just know that it means any activity that is weight-bearing and any type of action that pushes or pulls against the body. Some examples include household chores, such as carrying groceries in from the car, helping to unload the dishwasher, raking leaves, and vacuuming. All kids love to “help” so have them help around the house while doing some heavy work. Some play activities are great heavy work as well, such as digging in the sandbox, jumping rope, or rolling out Play Dough. Heavy work helps children feel centered and have more body awareness. Heavy work activities not only aid the child in establishing and exercising weight bearing push and pull motions, but it also assists the child to focus their mind and calm their nerves. Utilizing these tasks can assist when the child seems bored or overwhelmed. It will provide them with an output to place their attention and focus while exercising their mind.

One of my favorite heavy work activities to have a child do is carrying, pushing, or pulling the laundry basket. This is great for children ages 18 months and up. We all have a laundry basket and if you are at all like me, then at least one is full. Have your

child move the laundry basket from point A to point B. Feel free to make this a more fun activity by placing toys in the basket or a sibling to push around. Just remember...It is important to start slow and build up your child's endurance. This will reduce the risk of any type of injury.

Heavy Work - Moving and Stacking Cans

This specific activity can be used with all children ages 8 months and up. When using it for younger children utilize smaller, lighter cans. As the child begins to master this (typically between 12-18 months) provide them with a wider variety of cans with different colored labels, multiple sizes, and weights.

What you need:

- A variety of cans in different weights, sizes, and contents
- An empty basket or box

What to do:

Provide the child with a variety of cans. If the child is an infant/young toddler provide them with light cans and ask them to place them in the basket with two hands. As the child masters this, provide them with a variety of cans of different sizes and contents. Ask them to first move the cans into the basket with two hands and then remove them. Once all cans have been placed into the basket and then removed, challenge the child to move the cans back into the basket while only using one hand this time. If the child is able to complete this quickly, and is developmentally ready, ask them to then stack the cans by sorting them. This can be done in any manner they see fit, whether it be matching the contents or sorting by the label color.

Oil and Water Sensory Bag

Another sensory activity that is easy to make with things we have at home is an oil and water sensory bag. This activity is great for babies during tummy time and for older children that love to watch and explore. Tape the finished bag on a window and watch the light shine through it.

To make this Oil and Water Sensory Bag, you will need:

- 1 gallon size freezer bag
- Baby oil
- Water
- Liquid food coloring
- Duct Tape

How to Make it:

You will want to reduce the risk of your bag bursting so the first thing you want to do is tape up the 3 closed sides of your bag with the duct tape. Place the tape on half of the bag and fold it over to the other side. I suggest doing the sides first and then the bottom. Now it's time to fill! Start with the baby oil and add about $\frac{1}{4}$ of a cup to the bag. Then you will want to add about 10 drops of food coloring. Lastly, you will add about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water. Seal the bag, pushing out most of the air. Tape the top edge of the bag with your duct tape and you're ready to play! The options are limitless for this activity. Just have fun and don't put anything with sharp edges inside.

Moon Sand

This sensory activity is perfect for toddlers, and very easy to do with items you have at home. This activity is ideal for outside since it tends to be messy. You can also make a "taste safe" version of it for smaller toddlers. You'll just need to substitute baby oil for coconut oil.

What you will need:

- 2 cups of flour
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of baby oil (or coconut oil if making the safe taste version)
- Toys (optional)

How to make it:

You will want to mix the flour with the baby oil very well to break up any balls of baby oil that form. You can also fill up a bucket by mixing 8 cups of flour with 1 cup of oil. Make sure whenever not using it, to store it in an airtight container. If doing the coconut oil version, combine the $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of coconut oil (remember to heat the coconut oil in the microwave until liquid) for every 2 cups of all all purpose flour flour. Just like with the other version, if you want to fill up a sensory bin you'd need about 2 to 3 times the amount.

In conclusion, all children are different and learn at different speeds. It is important not to push or force an activity on them. Sit back and observe your child to see how they respond to these activities. Their preferences and or needs many change daily. Find a way to meets their needs in addition to challenging them. This should be a fun time for you and your child to share together.

In conclusion, all children are different and learn at different speeds. It is important not to push or force an activity on them. Sit back and observe your child to see how they respond to these activities. Their preferences and/or needs may change daily so do not give up or force any one activity on them. Your child may love or hate it tomorrow. Find a way to meet their needs in addition to challenging them. This should be a fun time for you and your child to share together.