

Sensory Processing, Behavior, and Self-Regulation: Strategies for Home and Elsewhere

Difficulty/Needs	Observable Behaviors	Possible Strategies
<p><u>Tactile Seeking</u> (it appears the nervous system is under-responsive to touch, so needs more to register & make sense of touch)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Touches everything *Mouths objects *Violates others' personal boundaries *Seems unaware of safety issues associated with touching *May not seem to respond to pain or injury 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Provide multiple, varied, daily touch opportunities through play. *Verbalize for the child about textures, giving words to them *Provide safe & developmentally appropriate objects to mouth & touch; praise touch of those objects & surfaces *Establish & maintain clear, developmentally appropriate structure & boundaries about what may and may not be touched *Help parents assure home safety *In groups, acknowledge and normalize differences in tolerance for touch <p>OTHERS:</p>
<p><u>Tactile Avoiding</u> (it appears the nervous system is over-responsive to touch, has trouble responding, and becomes disorganized by too much of it)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Fearful of unfamiliar textures *May prefer to touch rather than be touched *May resist face washing, tooth brushing, & other hygiene involving touch *May resist transition from breast/bottle to solid foods *May be "fussy" about clean hands, bare feet & other body surfaces *Parents may report negative responses to textures of clothing & other surfaces *May react negatively to touch from others, particularly light, sweeping touch *May show delays in development of hand skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Provide multiple, varied, and daily touch opportunities through play *Provide touch that is firm, rather than light *Acknowledge & normalize preferences & touch pleasure *Structure and routinize hygiene & dressing so child knows what to expect from you, & what is expected of her - maybe use picture/symbol system *Use pre-meal and hygiene times to offer touch; for example clean, alternately cool and warm, damp washcloths *Alert the child that touch is coming *Provide touch input first to less sensitive areas of back and limbs; oral-facial area, palms, and front of trunk, including tummy, are most sensitive. *Learn and provide short sessions of deep pressure massage in conjunction with diaper changes, lotion application, play times, and during cuddles. *Include child, but provide for graded exposure during tactile play; praise participation *Verbalize with and for the child about textures, giving words to areas being touched and textures of surfaces *Provide structure and developmentally appropriate expectations for mealtimes; generally grade exposure to new food textures & offer non-favorite foods when child is hungriest (at meal's beginning) <p>OTHERS:</p>

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<p><u>Proprioceptive Seeking</u> (it appears the nervous system is under-responsive to pressure, or needs more of it to orient in space, know the limits of the body, and alert for learning).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *May throw self against surfaces, objects, & people *May unwittingly hug, squeeze, & "pat" too hard *May seek out small spaces against which to lean *May consistently break toys, *May bite or pinch when excited *May climb, jump, push the limits; be described as a "thrill seeker" *May prefer crunchy foods & new experiences *May have difficulty remaining seated and focusing visual and other attending skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Provide acceptable objects to mouth, bite & chew *Provide "heavy work" activity either individually or in group *In class, acknowledge & talk about differences *Give voice to (praise) hugging self, others, objects as self-soothing *Help parents monitor and stress safety *Provide and help parents construct temporary or permanent, tight play spaces ("caves") *Give deep, firm pressure to shoulders or top of head to gently compress spine *Provide jumping, hopping, & clapping breaks as needed and as can be wedged into more focused, "still" work *Deep pressure can also be provided in the form of weight added to the body. <p>OTHERS:</p>
<p><u>Proprioceptive Avoiding</u> (it appears the nervous system is over-responsive to pressure, and does not use feedback to grade how firmly to grasp or push. The nervous system is easily flooded, or overwhelmed by the perception that the body is "hemmed-in")</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *May punch out or strike others unexpectedly when touched *May have particular difficulty with lines and other close quarters *May seem unable to apply the right amount of pressure *May seem especially awkward when faced with unfamiliar movement challenges *May have difficulties with trunk flexibility & mobility *May avoid gross motor activity & prefer fine motor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Provide additional hands-on help to line up *Provide a very specific "target" when you ask him to sit or stand in place *Build & help children motor through obstacle courses; as they are able, enable them to construct with toys (and visually) with your help *Acknowledge, name, and normalize emotional responses of fear, anger, that are associated with tight spaces and crowds *Time outtings & provide clear expectations & "space breaks" *These kids can really benefit from the same activities as those who seek proprioceptive input; these children may become more alert, while the others may become calmer. <p>OTHERS:</p>

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<p><u>Vestibular Seeking</u> (it appears the nervous system is under-responsive to movement, so needs more to register & make sense of)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Moves constantly * Seeks passive as well as active movement * likely does better in confined than open spaces * Seems to "ramp up" following movement activity, to become easily over-excited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Pair movement opportunities with deep pressure (see previous chart), since the deep pressure helps orient and calm * utilize weights and heavy work to calm, steady, and focus * Where possible, build limited-range, low-intensity, and repetitive movement options into other activity that requires focus; "wiggle" seating, for example * experiment with repetitive, "sing-song" type sounds (metronome-like beats or singing) that may help the child pace him or herself * Help family provide structure to remove extraneous stimuli & position "quiet" breaks * Provide movement breaks <p>OTHERS:</p>
<p><u>Vestibular Avoiding</u> (it appears the nervous system does not know quite how to respond to movement, and movement is disorienting, disorganizing, or downright frightening).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * may withdraw or react with fear at exposure to, novel play environments that invite other children * if verbal, may decline actively or present many reasons why he/she is "just not interested" or "bored" with movement * May easily become nauseous with movement. * Avoids playground equipment * Fears and avoids rough play, especially being lifted off the ground * Seeks out and perhaps displays advanced hand skills at the expense of movement & gross motor development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * RESPECT and honor fear * Start "low and slow" * Provide for privacy in the case of prior ridicule or embarrassment * Help the child become more accustomed to movement by grading it (just a little to start with) * Look for movement opportunities where the feet are still on the ground or you continue to hold the child <p>Observe closely during movement...maybe back and forth is ok, and you need to go slowly to add side to side</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Rotary (spinning) movement is usually the most difficult * Always respect the child's determination of "enough" * Praise progress: respect and name expressed fear and other emotions <p>OTHERS:</p>