

SENSORY STRATEGIES FOR SEEKING BEHAVIOURS

The child-guided aspect of Sensory Integration (SI) works on the premise that the child will often seek out the sensory input they need.

Sensory presentation/behaviour	Rule of thumb advice
<p>Vestibular seeking behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rocking • Jumping • Pacing • Throwing self on the floor • Spinning • Head banging • Ear flicking (vibration component) • Humming 	<p>Provide appropriate alternatives to provide the desired input:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scooter board activities • Therapy ball activities • Use of the swing, as demonstrated • Rolling • Forwards/backwards, side-to-side movements
<p>Proprioceptive seeking behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Running, jumping, stamping, throwing self down • Head banging • Shakes, cracks, or stretches limbs or extremities (contraction) • Hitting self or others • Pressing self along walls/corridors • Leaning body against objects or peers • Seeking pressure on head or body (not always appropriately) 	<p>Provide deep pressure/heavy work (proprioceptive) input to help calm and organize the nervous system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy work for the muscles at school advice sheet • Animal walks • Weight-bearing, push/pull activities • Activities that work against resistance and gravity • Oral motor activities – see advice sheet • Alternative positions for sitting – side lying, kneeling, working at an easel • Theraband around the legs of a chair • Squeezes/joint compressions • Weighted equipment (blanket, hat, Bear Hug etc) • Vibration
<p>Tactile seeking behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loves touching and being touched • Seeks out something to touch – not always appropriately • Always fiddling with something with hands • Touches everything or everyone, craving certain textures • Often try to balance out touch sensations on either side of the body (i.e. touching something with your left hand and then NEEDING to touch it with your right hand) 	<p>Provide appropriate additional opportunities for such input:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fidget toys, especially those with different textures and resistances • Messy/food play • Multi-sensory mediums to replace everyday tasks ie paint for pre-writing rather than pencils

<p>Oral seeking behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mouthing non-food items past the developmental norms • Biting • Chewing jumper sleeve, collar, pencil tops • Strong preference for/ craves certain textures and flavours excessively • Frequently overstuffs mouth when eating, even to the point of gagging • Will suck on things excessively 	<p>Provide appropriate additional opportunities for such input:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral motor stimulation- see advice sheet • Chewlery/chewy tubes • Opportunities to trial different flavours, textures, temperatures • Vibration (ie. Electric toothbrush, Ark oral motor tool) • 'Funny faces' – stretching cheeks
<p>Auditory seeking behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loves/seeks loud noises, often watch TV and listen to music very loudly • Will often speak louder than is necessary • May frequently make noises just to hear them • Needs a background noise to concentrate 	<p>Provide appropriate additional opportunities for such input:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music/audio stimulus via headphones • Playing musical instruments • Humming/singing • Blowing whistles etc
<p>Visual seeking behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May love or crave bright lights • May frequently stare at bright lights or spinning or moving objects • Needs a lot of light in a room to concentrate or focus • Self-stimulatory behaviours ie. Flicking fingers or an object in front of eyes • Fixation on wall displays or particular colours or patterns 	<p>Provide appropriate additional opportunities for such input:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensory toys • Lava lamps/bubble machines • Flash lights • Watching things fall from a height ie. grains of rice/water/sand
<p>Olfactory seeking behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Craves certain smells excessively • Needs to smell everything and everybody 	<p>Provide appropriate additional opportunities for such input:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities that use different scents ie. Aromatherapy oils, scented candles, herbs, spices, flowers etc

SENSORY STRATEGIES FOR AVOIDANCE / DEFENSIVE BEHAVIOURS

Never force a child to participate in an activity they demonstrate adverse reactions to. Such exposure does not increase tolerance.

Sensory presentation/behaviour	Rule of thumb advice
<p>Vestibular <u>avoidance/defensive</u> behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited exploratory play • 'Lethargic' • Dislike/avoidance of movement including tilting into backward space • Dysfunction causes resistance to moving playground equipment, such as swings, slides or merry-go-rounds • Desires stationary tasks and moves slowly and cautiously • Fear of heights and falling • Easily lose balance or described as 'clumsy' • Avoidance of stairs and escalators • Demand physical support from an adult 	<p>Liaise with the OT and feedback on the observed behaviours.</p>
<p>Proprioceptive <u>avoidance/defensive</u> behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low regulation or 'lethargic' • Can present similarly to tactile defensiveness 	<p>Encourage the child to participate in alerting activities. <u>Note:</u> Generally rhythmic movement is calming (forwards/backwards, side-to-side) while erratic movement (including rotatory) is alerting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See advice sheet - alerting activities <p>NB: If a child avoids or is intolerant to movement, liaise with the OT before trying alerting strategies.</p>
<p>Tactile <u>avoidance/defensive</u> behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds with fear, avoidance, withdrawal, or acting out with a "fight-or-flight" response to tactile stimuli • Avoidance of certain textures messy play • May only tolerate touch when self-initiated/on own terms • Limited exploration/engagement in play 	<p>Trial the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep pressure/heavy work activities prior to a tactile activity • Vibration • Grading the child's exposure to the tactile stimulus ie. Let them use a tool (paintbrush, stick, or a toy) for cautious exploration. • Grade the textures the child does not like, taking their lead on their tolerance

<p>Oral <u>avoidance/defensive</u> behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Fussy eaters' – avoidance of certain textures/tastes • Overactive response to food/textures ie. gagging. • Oversensitivity to activities such as brushing teeth – may report it hurts them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See advice sheets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Picky eaters - Oral motor activities • Deep pressure to the mouth may increase tolerance ie. blowing, sucking, chewy/crunchy foods • Food play
<p>Auditory <u>avoidance/defensive</u> behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fearful or irritable when subjected to certain sounds (may be pitch or volume) • May cover ears or hum to block out noise • May trigger an aggressive fight-flight response • May make excessively more noise (within their control) to drown out the unwanted sound. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ear defenders/sound-cancelling head phones • Observe silence where possible • Identify and label sounds • Enable the child to control the volume where possible • Strategies to enable the child to indicate the need for a break where possible • Identification of a safe space with reduced stimulus
<p>Visual <u>avoidance/defensive</u> behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-sensitive to bright lights causing an agitated response • Adverse reactions to a visually busy or over-stimulating environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-quality sunglasses outdoors • Tinted lenses indoors if sensitive to glare • Wide brim hat or visor outdoors • Games and activities that develop visual skills • Use of different strength/coloured light bulbs
<p>Olfactory <u>avoidance/defensive</u> behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverse reactions to and avoidance of particular smells 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploration of different smells