Helping Sensory-Sensitive Kids in a Sensory-Intensive World
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What is sensory integration?
Sensory integration (SI) is a neurobiological activity within our bodies in which the nervous system processes information from the senses. Sensory integration is the brain’s and nervous system’s ability to organize stimuli. When sensations flow in an organized manner, the brain can use these sensations to form perceptions, behavior, and learning.

Far senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch) vs. near senses (tactile, vestibular, proprioceptive)
From infancy we develop the ability to filter out a tremendous amount of sensory information unless we are in danger. However, some people’s filtering mechanisms don’t work properly, either filtering too little or too much. This can result in a person having a hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity in one or more sensory areas, which may categorize him / her as having Sensory Integration Dysfunction / Sensory Processing Disorder.

Questions to consider:

1) How are SI issues assessed and diagnosed?

2) How does sensory processing relate to other conditions, such as autism or ADHD?

3) What types of interventions can be useful for a child with sensory issues?

4) Can these interventions be helpful in the overall development of all children?

5) How can my knowledge of SI improve my classroom practices?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The hypersensitive (oversensitive) child seeks less stimulation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Sensations</strong></th>
<th><strong>The hyposensitive child (undersensitive) child seeks more stimulation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The child avoids touching or being touched by objects and people. He may react with a fight-or-flight response to getting dirty, to certain textures of clothing (e.g., tags in clothes) and food, and to another person's unexpected light touch.</td>
<td>Touch</td>
<td>The child may be unaware of pain, temperature, or how objects feel. He may play in the mud, paw through toys purposelessly, chew on inedible objects like shirt cuffs, rub against walls and furniture, and bump into people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The child may become overexcited when there is too much to look at (e.g., words, toys, other children). He may often cover his eyes, have poor eye contact, or be inattentive when drawing or doing desk work, or overreact to bright light. He may be hyper-vigilant (on the alert and ever watchful).</td>
<td>Sights</td>
<td>Although able to see, the child may touch everything to learn about it because his vision is not sufficiently coordinated. He may miss important visual cues such as another person's facial expressions and gestures or signposts or written directions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The child may cover his ears to close out sounds or voices. He may complain about noises such as the vacuum or blender that don't bother others.</td>
<td>Sounds</td>
<td>The child may ignore voices and have difficulty following verbal directions. He may not listen well to himself and may speak in a booming voice. He may like the TV or radio playing loudly or frequently hum to himself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The child may object to odors (such as a ripe banana) that other children do not notice.</td>
<td>Smells</td>
<td>The child may ignore unpleasant odors such as dirty diapers. He may sniff food, people, and objects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The child may strongly object to certain textures and temperatures of food. He may gag easily and often when he eats.</td>
<td>Tastes</td>
<td>The child may lick or taste inedible objects such as Playdoh or toys. He may prefer very spicy or hot foods, and he may suck or chew things to soothe himself.</td>
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<td>The child avoids moving or being unexpectedly moved, may be insecure about heights, or may be anxious when tipped off balance. He may be earthbound and avoid running, climbing, sliding, or swinging. He may feel motion sick in cars or elevators.</td>
<td>Movement (vestibular)</td>
<td>The child may crave fast and spinning movements such as swinging, rocking, twirling, and riding merry-go-rounds and experience them without getting dizzy. He may move constantly, fidget, enjoy getting into upside-down positions, and be a daredevil.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The child may be rigid, tense, stiff, and uncoordinated. He may avoid playground activities that require good body awareness.</td>
<td>Body position (proprioceptive)</td>
<td>The child may slump and slouch. His actions may be clumsy and inaccurate. He may bump into objects, stamp his feet, and twiddle his fingers.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


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Alicia T. Noddings, Ph.D. 2012 ISACS Conference - Louisville, KY
Additional Resources: Books / Articles

Additional Resources: Websites
- The Star Center, Denver, CO, operated by Lucy Jane Miller, a research center for sensory processing issues - [http://www.starcenter.us/](http://www.starcenter.us/)
- Fact sheet on sensory integration through the American Occupational Therapy Association - [http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Fact-Sheets-on-the-Role-of-OT/Fact-Sheet.aspx](http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Fact-Sheets-on-the-Role-of-OT/Fact-Sheet.aspx)
- SI Focus – magazine and resources produced / directed by Carol Stock Kranowitz [http://www.sifocus.com/](http://www.sifocus.com/)

Catalog with Classroom Tools
- Abilitations catalog, through School Specialty – [www.abilitations.com](http://www.abilitations.com)
**Additional Resources: Curricular Resources**
- “How Does Your Engine Run?” by Mary Sue Williams and Sherry Shellenberger. [http://alertprogram.com](http://alertprogram.com)
- Brain Gym - [http://www.braingym.org](http://www.braingym.org)
- Bal-a-vis X - [http://www.bal-a-vis-x.com](http://www.bal-a-vis-x.com)

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