



Supporting a child with Sensory Differences – Family guide

Sensory processing is defined as;

"The neurological process that organises sensation from one's own body and from the environment and makes it possible for us to use the body effectively within the environment." -Jean Ayres

Or in other words – how our bodies send messages to our brain to understand our world!

We all use sensory information in our daily lives, such as being able to understand if our cup of tea is the right temperature in the morning, or balancing ourselves on the way up and down stairs. And like it or not, sensory information is EVERYWHERE.

Some of us seek out extra sensory input to keep us calm and alert by fidgeting, biting our pen, going for a walk or drinking a strong coffee. Others will withdraw from sensation and avoid it by wanting to be in a dark environment, turning the radio off when parking, avoiding close contact with others and strong flavours in food - These are just naming a few!

Most of us will have sensory preferences and little quirks, and we have likely developed ways of managing these to help us in our daily lives. For a lot of us, our sensory preferences can change on a day to day basis, depending on things like who we are with, what mood we are in and maybe what else is going on at the time.

Ways to support a child with Sensory Processing Difficulties at home:

- Avoid letting sensory preferences become 'a big deal' to the child and try to remain neutral and encouraging of whatever they are finding challenging.
- Help your child to manage their sensory preferences by talking about them with others, and reminding them that it's okay to be different from other people.
- Remember, the more we avoid things, they can become a more significant issue, and the less chance our minds and bodies will have to get used to it. For important activities in your child's everyday life, such as dressing, brushing their hair, and accessing play group; increased exposure will help support their management and tolerance. Avoiding situations can sometimes make them worse in the long run. But it's essential that when you do these things, you have strategies in place to make them bearable.
- Find out your child's preferences. Note them down and seek advice as to which activities/strategies may support them.
- Look at Stockport's Local Offer page for additional advice and information about Sensory Difficulties

https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/stockport/fsd/files/sensory_processing_resource_pack_for_parents_and_caregivers.pdf