

Exploring the Senses:
Session Two
Sensory Detective:
Understanding Unique Sensory Needs

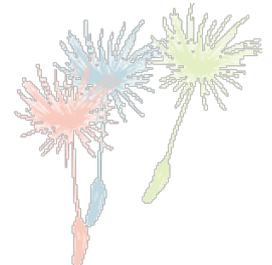
Bethany Brewin, M.Sc. OT
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AutismONTARIO

Outline

1. Sensory Detective: review
2. High Threshold vs. Low Threshold
3. Sensory Styles:
 - Low Registration
 - Sensory Seeking
 - Sensory Sensitive
 - Sensory Avoiding
4. Sensory Detective: spotting the clues



Review: What are the Senses?

Smell



Hearing



Taste



Vision



Touch



Vestibular



Proprioception



Interoception

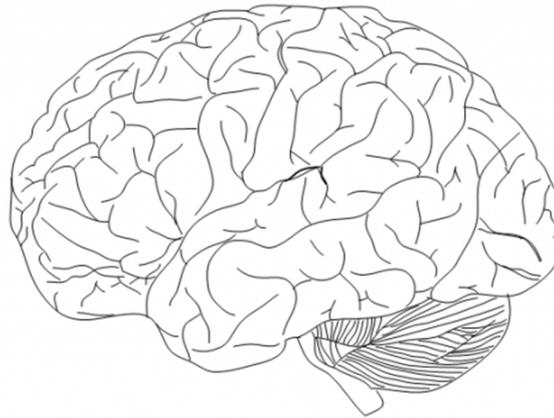
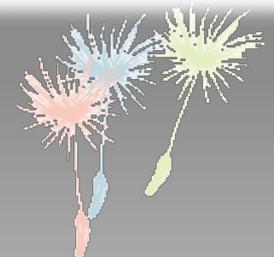
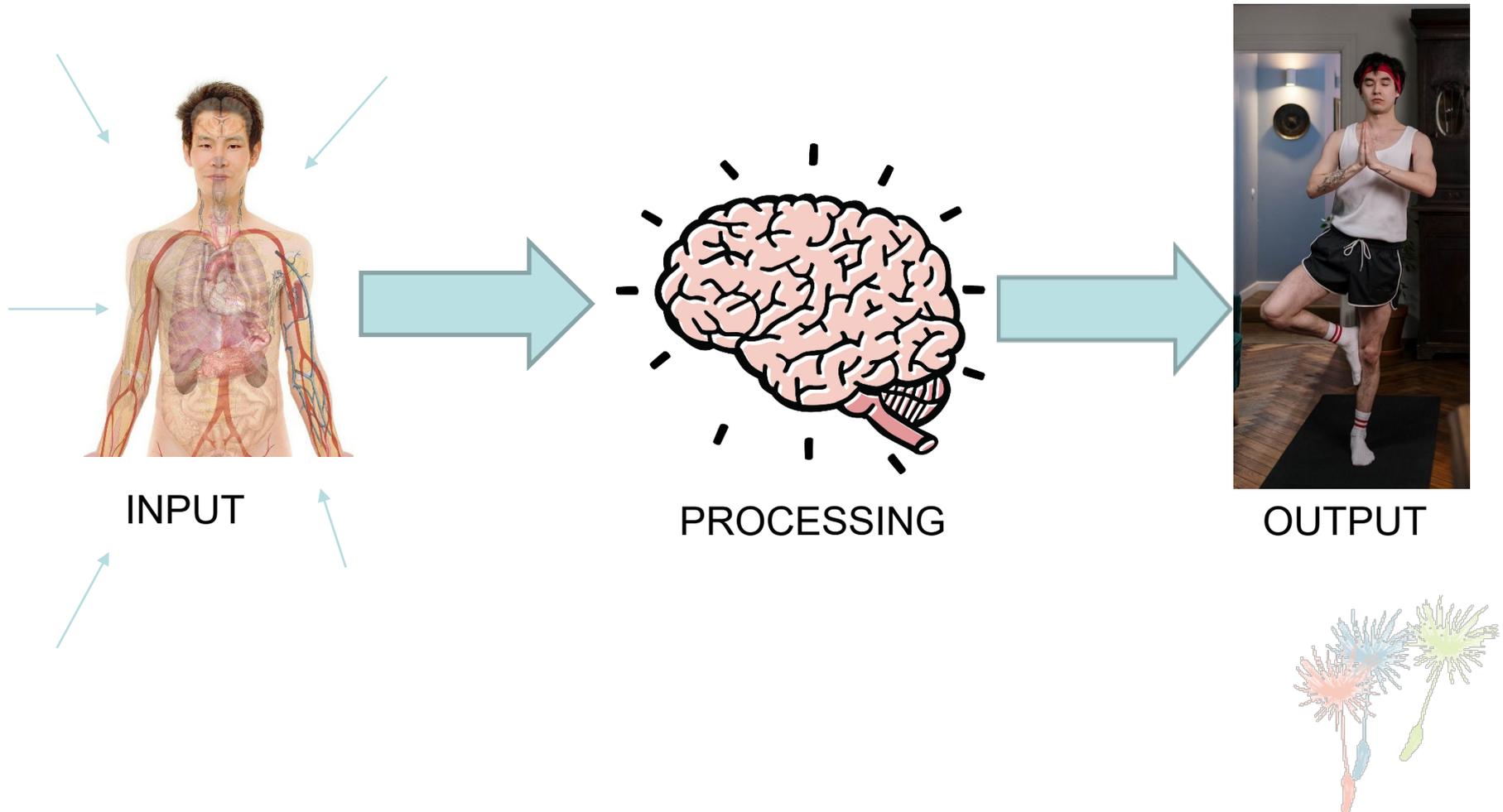


Image from AIDE Canada: “Sensory Processing Toolkit”:
[Sensory Processing Differences Toolkit \(aidecanada.ca\)](http://aidecanada.ca)



Review: Sensory Integration



Review: Sensory Challenges

Some people are under-responsive to sensory stimulation, and others are over-responsive.

We call this having a “high threshold” or a “low threshold” for sensory input.



Sensory Styles

(based on Dunn's Four Quadrant Model of Sensory Processing, 1997)

High Threshold (big cup)

Low Registration



Sensory Seeking



Passive
Response

Active
Response

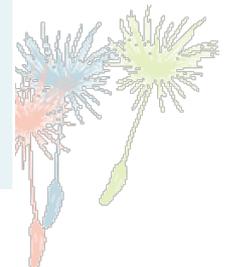
Sensory Sensitivity



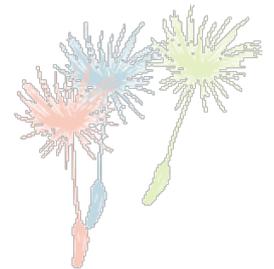
Sensory Avoiding



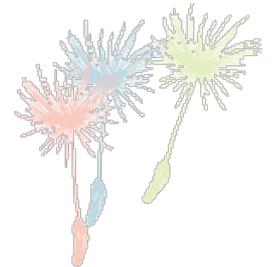
Low Threshold (small cup)



High Threshold = “Big Cup”



Low Threshold = “Small Cup”



High Threshold (“big cup”)



Low Registration

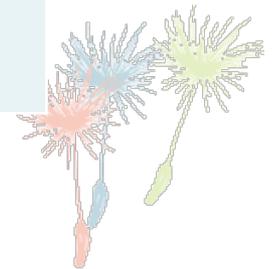


Sensory Seeking

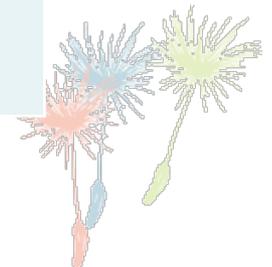
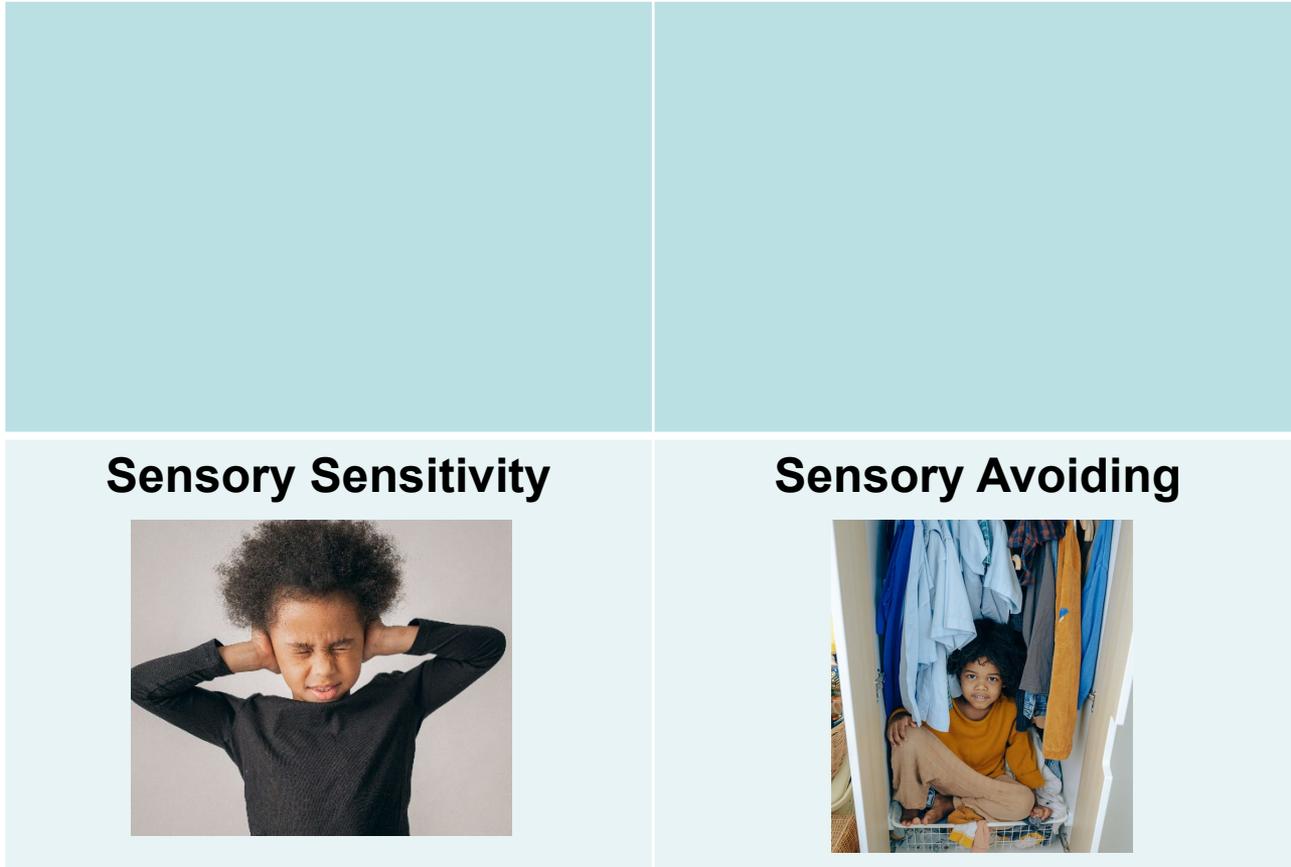


Passive
Response

Active
Response



Low Threshold (“small cup”)



Sensory Styles (Dunn, 1997)

High Threshold (big cup)

Low Registration



Sensory Seeking



Sensory Sensitivity



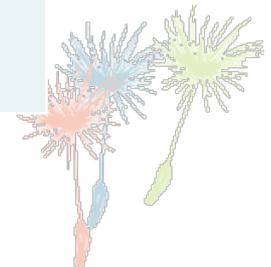
Sensory Avoiding



Low Threshold (small cup)

Passive
Response

Active
Response



Recall: Sensory Challenges

Do You Know Me?

I cry and shield my eyes from the sun and other bright lights

I hate having my hair washed or cut

I have trouble focusing and/or concentrating

I have "selective hearing" or difficulty listening

I am overly sensitive to loud sounds like vacuums and blenders

I am a picky eater - I resist new foods and textures

I am always smelling people, food and objects

I complain about tags in my clothing

I chew on everything

I seem unaware of normal touch or pain - I often touch others too soft or too hard

I have poor fine motor skills for things like handwriting and cutting

I hate being tickled or cuddled!

I always walk on my tiptoes

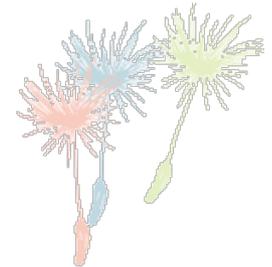
I have difficulty dressing myself

I sit with my legs in a "W" position

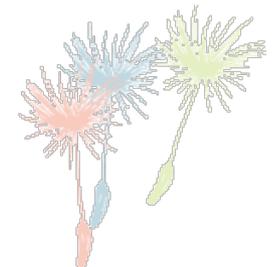
I have poor gross motor skills for things like running and riding a bike

I put my socks on "just so" or maybe I never go barefoot

STAR Institute
for Sensory Processing Disorder



Case Example #1: “Elliott”

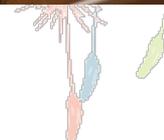


Case Example #1: “Elliott”

“I sometimes don’t feel “connected” to my body—my arms and legs always get in the way, so even when I try to be careful, grownups are getting mad at me for being clumsy. Sometimes after playing outside at recess, I feel a bit better—like I have more energy.

During school lessons, I can’t really see the Smart Board, and I don’t know what I’m supposed to do. I kind of feel bored and not interested in the lesson. I wish school was more exciting. I have a hard time sitting on the floor but when I try to lie down I always get in trouble.

There’s always something to see and listen to, so I’m not” really sure which things are important. I wish there was a way to know what I’m supposed to be doing.”



Sensory Styles (Dunn, 1997)

High Threshold (big cup)

Low Registration



Sensory Seeking



Sensory Sensitivity



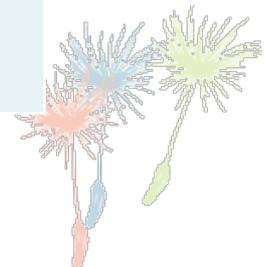
Sensory Avoiding



Passive
Response

Active
Response

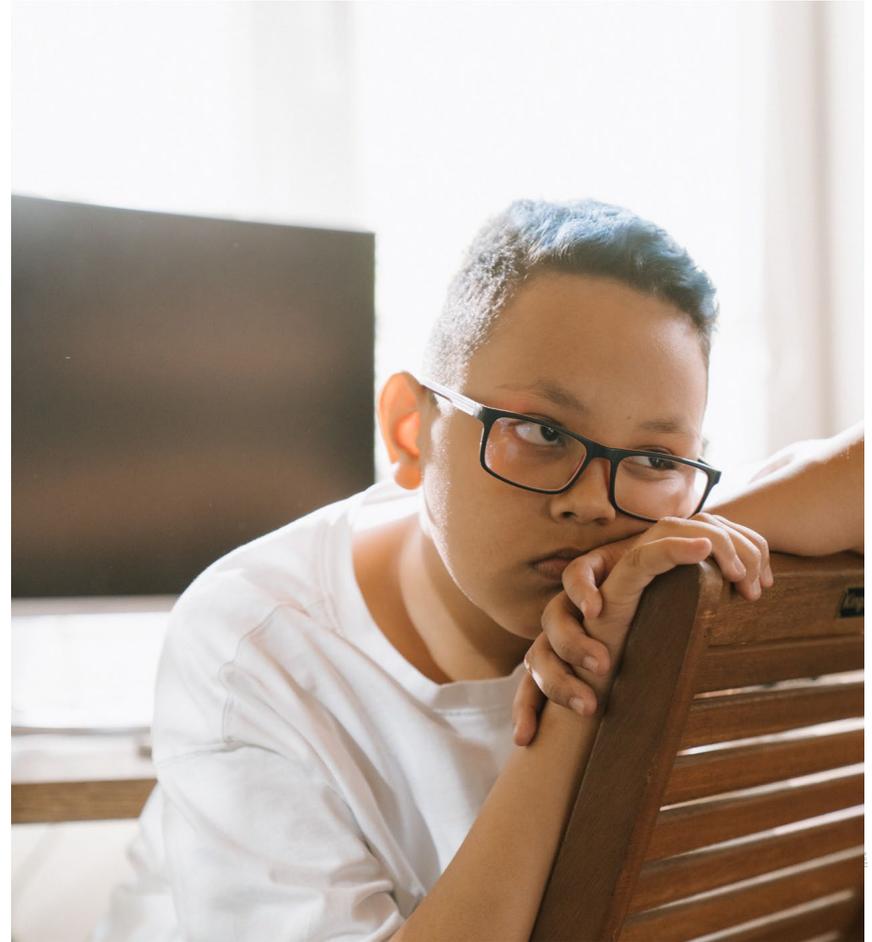
Low Threshold (small cup)



“Low Registration”: Characteristics

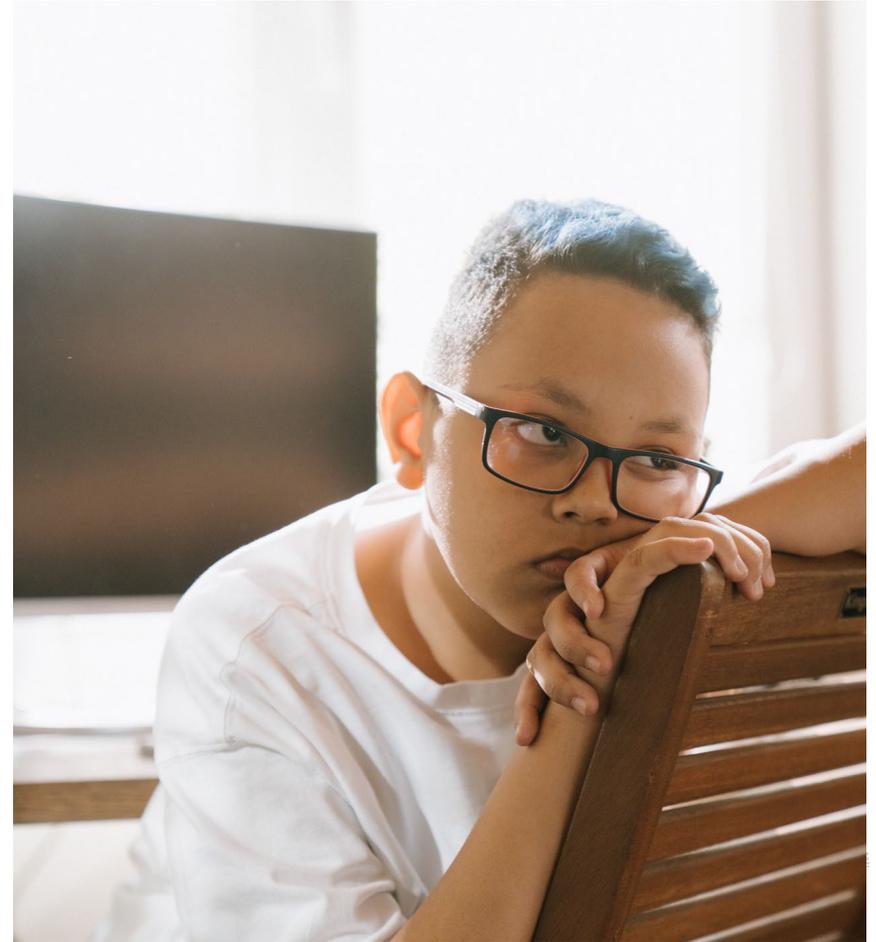
(big cup/high threshold; passive response):

- Show delayed responses to questions/commands
- React little or not at all to stimulation
- Lean on walls, prop up body at table
- Show poor body awareness: bumping into furniture or peers
- Appear “messy” or “clumsy”
- Love to “hang out” but does not love to move
- Love quiet activities such as iPads, computers, etc.



“Low Registration”: Strategies

- Ensure activities are very multisensory and stimulating
- Use bright colors, upbeat music, energetic language, and tactile materials
- Offer alerting tools: cold water, crunchy or chewy foods with strong flavours, fidget tools
- Offer seating options that provide support and allow for movement in order to stay engaged
- Communicate face to face
- Use visuals to aide communication and understanding



Case Example #2: “Juliette”



Case Example #2: “Juliette”

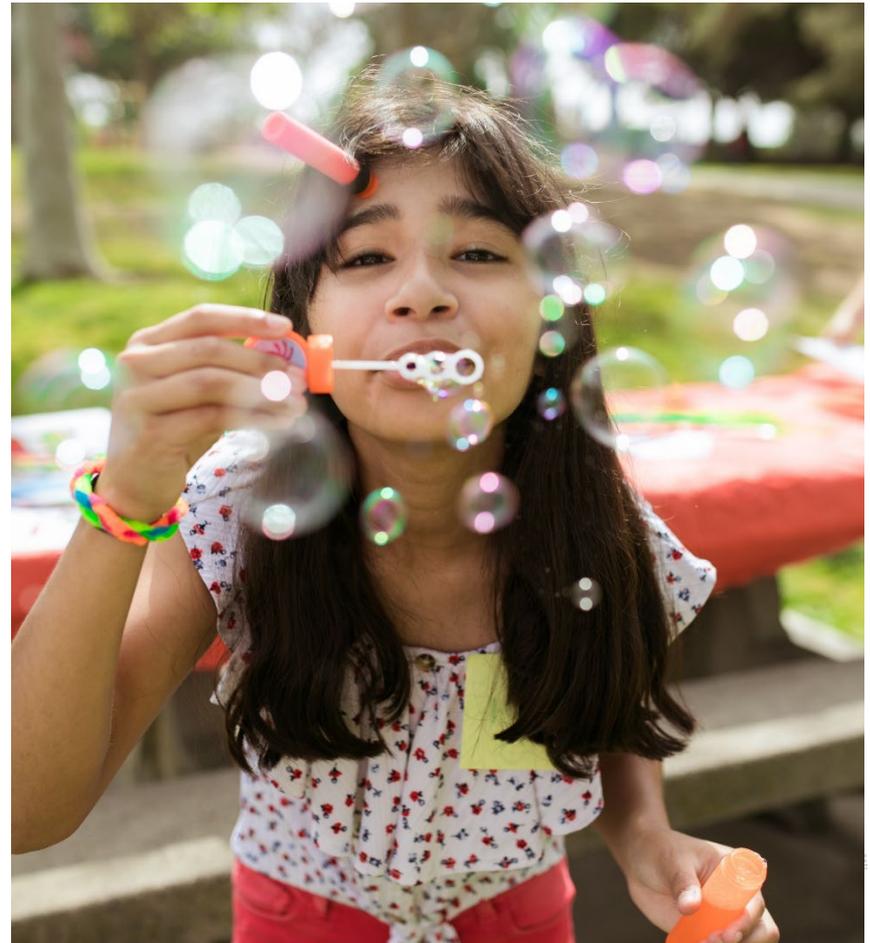
“I love playing outside, but we only get to do it for a short time every day—I wish I could be outside all day! I like to explore, but our classroom is boring--I wish there were new games and activities every day.

Holding and chewing things helps to keep me calm, but grownups are always telling me “no” and taking things away from me.

I love wrestling with my brother at home, but at school I get in trouble any time I touch another kid.

Being loud makes me feel happy, but grownups are always saying “shhh!”—be quiet!

I wish I could sit quietly like the other kids, but my body needs to MOVE!”



Sensory Styles (Dunn, 1997)

High Threshold (big cup)

Low Registration



Sensory Seeking



Sensory Sensitivity



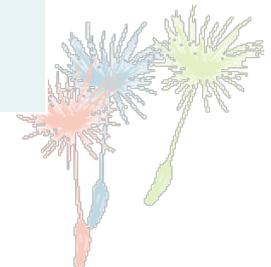
Sensory Avoiding



Low Threshold (small cup)

Passive
Response

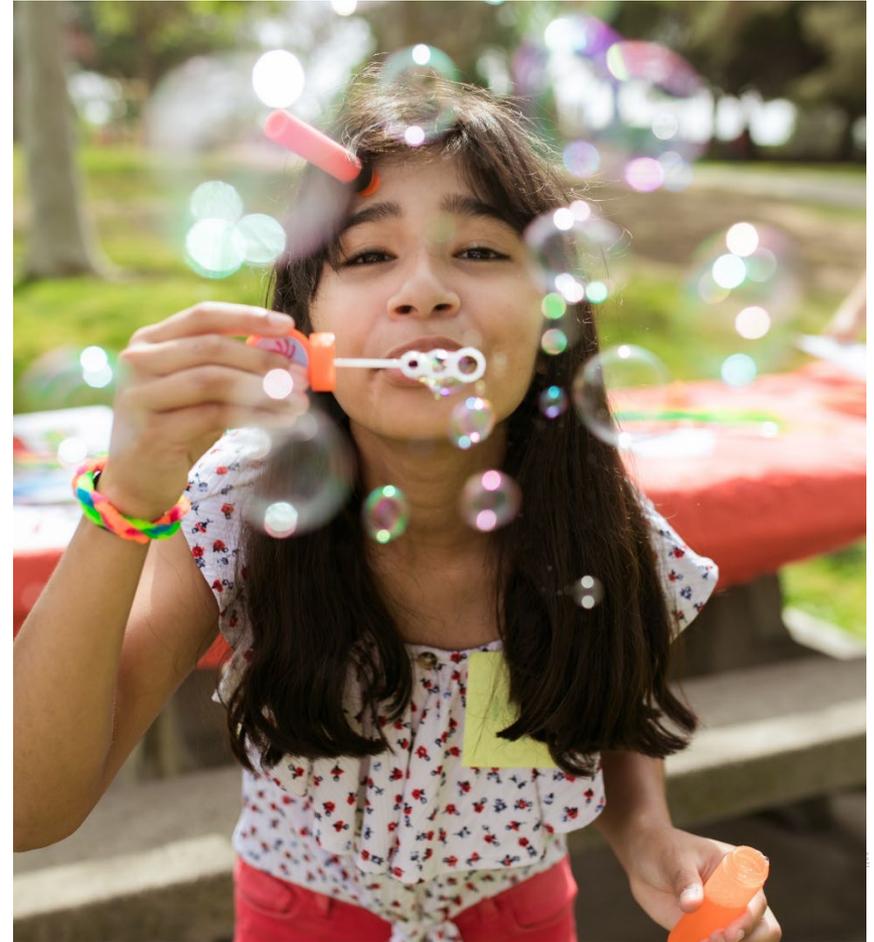
Active
Response



“Sensory Seekers”: Characteristics

(big cup/high threshold; active)

- Have an appetite for sensation and love to move
- Like to “crash”, “touch”, “spin”, enjoy rough play
- Chew on clothing or objects, put things in their mouths
- Fidget and have difficulty sitting still
- Love loud noises

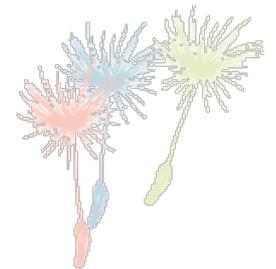
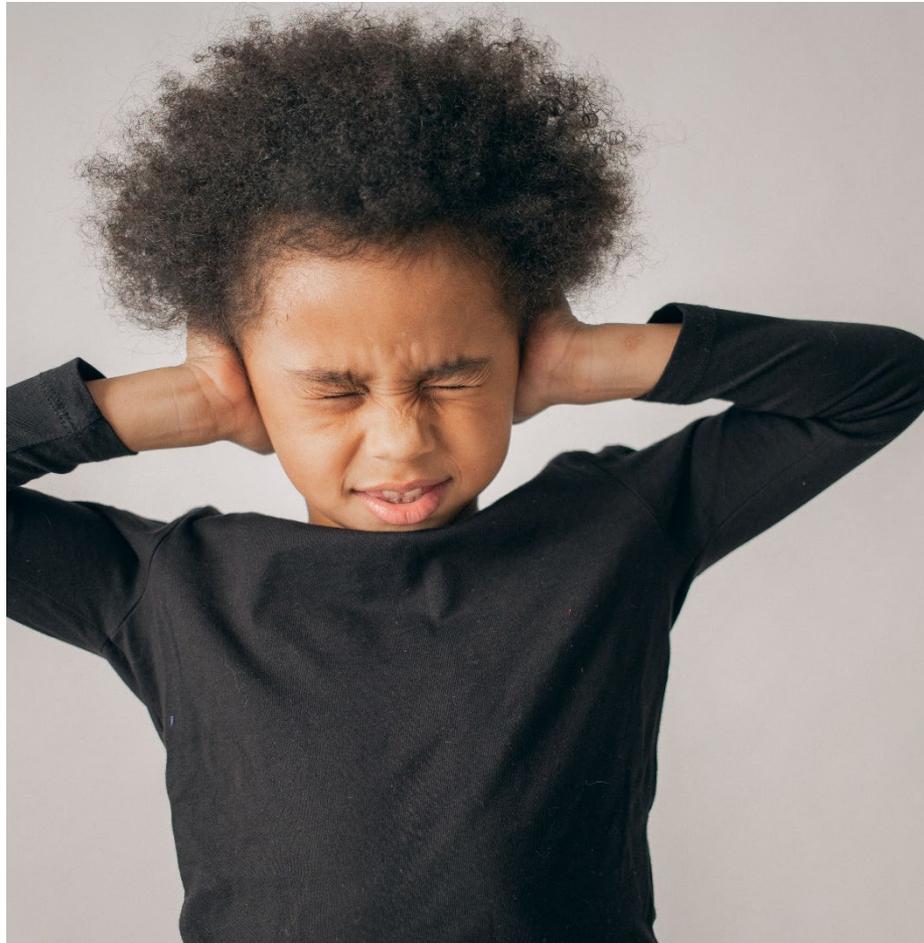


“Sensory Seekers”: Strategies

- Incorporate LOTS of movement opportunities and heavy work throughout the day
- Seating options: sitting on rocking chairs or therapy balls; move and sit cushion
- Chewies and fidget tools
- Teach appropriate times to make noise and understand that they may love to be loud
- Keep hands busy
- Use visuals!



Case Example #3: “Hannah”



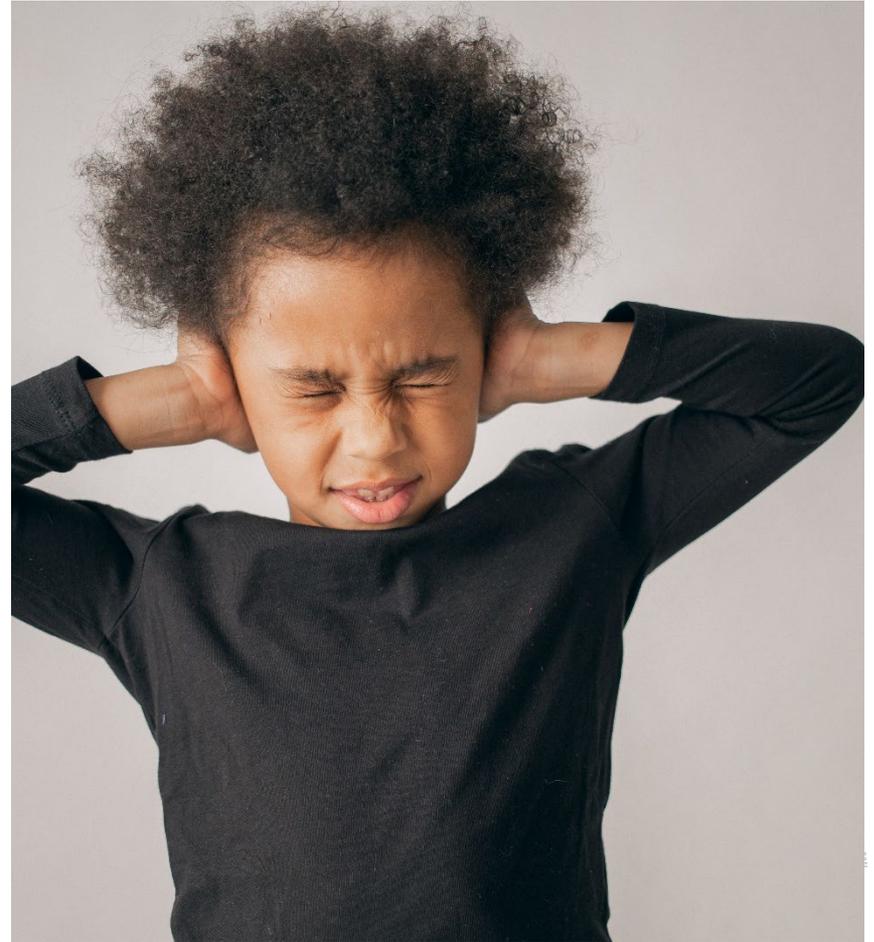
Case Example #3: “Hannah”

“School is loud and scary. I wish there was somewhere quiet I could go to feel better.

My clothes feel itchy, my ears hurt, and the lights make my eyes feel funny.

*No one seems to understand that these things actually **hurt** me—grownups are always telling me to stop complaining.*

I want to be at home where I feel safe and I know what to expect.”



Sensory Styles (Dunn, 1997)

High Threshold (big cup)

Low Registration



Sensory Seeking



Sensory Sensitivity



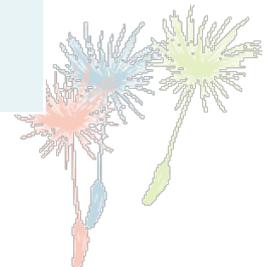
Sensory Avoiding



Low Threshold (small cup)

Passive
Response

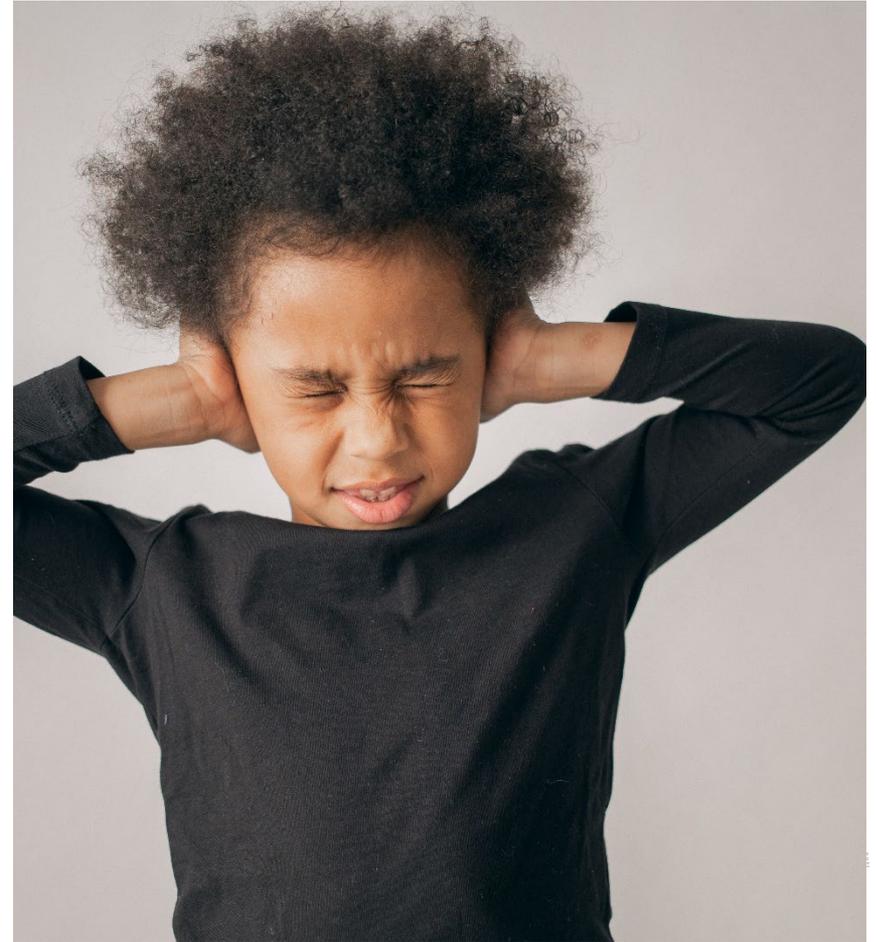
Active
Response



“Sensory Sensitivity”: Characteristics

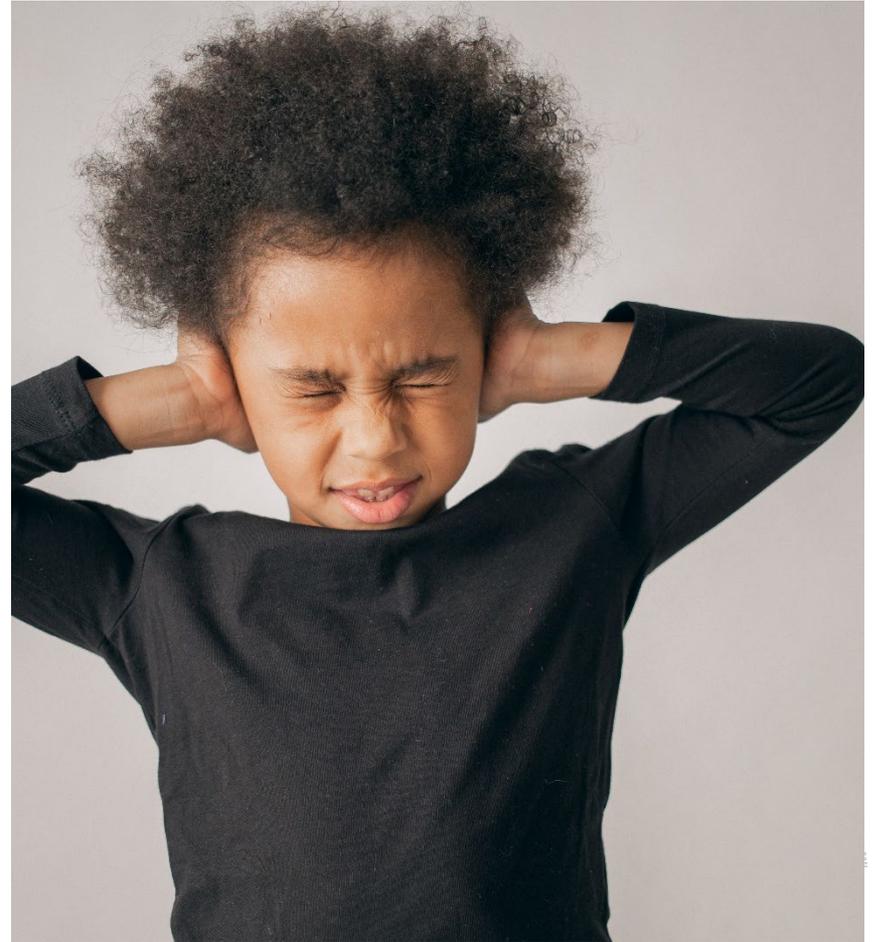
(small cup/low threshold; passive)

- Show distress with loud noises
- May be sensitive to light
- Dislike certain clothing
- Have frequent startle reactions, meltdowns, tantrums



“Sensory Sensitivity”: Strategies

- Use a gentle, understanding approach
- Minimize noise when possible
- Clip tags off of clothing, buy seamless socks and mittens
- Balance between exposing to new sensory experiences, and offering strategies to “avoid” as needed
- Offer a “calm space” or “cozy corner” as a safe retreat when needed



Case Example #4: “Levi”



Case Example #4: “Levi”

“I don’t like feeling sticky.

I don’t like loud.

*I don’t like yucky food that feels weird
in my mouth.*

I don’t like feeling like I’m falling.

*I don’t like itchy clothes with itchy
tags.*

*These things make me feel bad so I
stay away from them whenever I can.*

*I wish people would stop trying to
make me do things that feel yucky
and weird!”*



Sensory Styles (Dunn, 1997)

High Threshold (big cup)

Low Registration



Sensory Seeking



Sensory Sensitivity



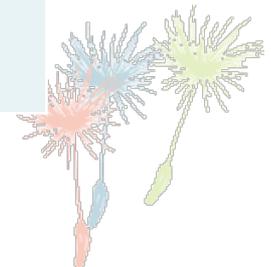
Sensory Avoiding



Passive
Response

Active
Response

Low Threshold (small cup)



“Sensory Avoiding”: Characteristics

(small cup/low threshold; active)

- May be a picky eater
- May have irrational fears of heights and movement
- Dislikes being “wet” “dirty” or “sticky”
- May “hide” under furniture
- May cover their ears or eyes



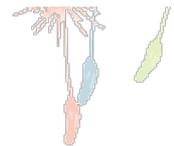
“Sensory Avoiding”: Strategies

- Provide sensory rich experiences, and gently encourage exploration:
- Offer opportunities to try new foods in a safe environment
- Offer a “calm space” or “cozy corner” as a safe retreat when needed
- Gentle and understanding approach



Sensory Detective: Spotting the Clues

- Do any of these sensory styles seem familiar?
- Do you notice a change in sensory styles:
 - environment/setting?
 - different senses?
 - timing?



Other Considerations

- Sleep
- Eating/nutrition
- Changes in routine
- Changes in environment (home/school)

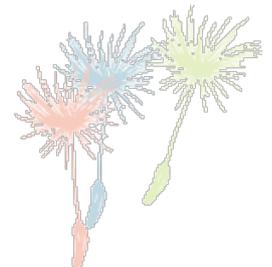


Next Session

Session Three:

Date: Wednesday June 15th, 12-1 pm

Exploring the Senses: Sensory Tools and Strategies for Children



Questions?

