

CHAPTER 4: IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS WITH SENSORY INTEGRATION

School/Work Checklist

TOUCH

Hyper-responsive

- has difficulty tolerating touch from others; struggles to stand in line, sit in a small circle or work in a confined space with others
- avoids expression of affection, such as hugs, comfort from teacher/peers
- dislikes holding writing or cutting utensils in the hand
- dislikes touch by an unpredictable texture: paint, glue, stickers, tape and/or objects that are wet or dirty
- has difficulty tolerating close one-on-one instruction and hand-over-hand demonstration
- tends to use the mouth, not hands, to learn about toys and other objects
- reacts aggressively to touch by others
- has outbursts during lining up or circle time
- has difficulty putting clothes on in a small cubby area
- dislikes holding the tools of the trade on the job
- has difficulty traveling in tight places, like the elevator or stairway
- has difficulty tolerating a uniform
- prefers to work alone to minimize touch
- avoids riding public transit during peak times

Hypo-responsive

- engages in excessive touching of objects and people
- has difficulty understanding space and the social boundaries of touch
- doesn't seem to notice changes in temperature
- doesn't seem to notice when they are hurt

PROPRIOCEPTION

Hypo-responsive

- has difficulty staying in one place; likes to take frequent movement breaks

BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH SENSORY INTEGRATION

- stabilizes self against furniture or others (can lean against other children in circle time or hook an arm or leg around a chair to hold themselves up)
- 'locks' joints to maintain upright posture
- has a weak grasp
- has difficulty maneuvering around the classroom, especially when there are physical changes in the environment due to impaired body awareness
- frequently drops books, pencils, tools, etc.
- tires easily
- uses chewing as a strategy to maintain attention and focus
- uses self stimulatory behavior to maintain attention or relieve stress

VESTIBULAR

Hyper-responsive

- is distractible, can easily lose visual attention, especially if the head is moved
- can use a self-stimulatory behavior with the head in order to maintain attention (rocking the head)
- has difficulty with visual tracking; easily loses place during reading
- feels fear and avoidance of the playground, gym and stairs
- dislikes car/bus rides, especially when travelling in reverse, as the eyes can't help process movement
- dislikes stops/starts and changes in direction of movement
- panics if stopped on the stairs
- dislikes changes in body position

Hypo-responsive

- needs to take frequent movement breaks
- has poor sitting balance in chairs and on the floor; is constantly in search of movement
- takes unnecessary risks during movement in the playground and in the gym

VISUAL

Hyper-responsive

- is overwhelmed by too much visual stimulation on the walls/around the blackboard, can easily get lost

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- pays attention to detail as a way to screen out overwhelming visual input
- demonstrates strong visual memory
- squints to decrease the intensity of the light
- prefers to wear a hat or sunglasses in class or at work
- prefers the dark
- closes blinds or dim lights
- has difficulty when the natural light changes with seasonal changes
- hesitates going down stairs, as depth can be difficult to judge

Hypo-responsive

- has difficulty finding objects against a cluttered background
- is unable to visually scan across a page without losing the sentence
- easily loses place when reading
- is interested in visually stimulating objects and will create visual stims by spinning or dropping objects
- has trouble staying between the lines when coloring or writing
- looks intently at people or objects
- does not have enough visual information to judge stairs properly
- looks intently at light sources or sharp contrasts

AUDITORY

Hyper-responsive

- covers ears frequently
- is very fearful of fire alarms
- speaks in a loud voice to screen out incoming noise
- startles at loud noises (PA system, door banging)
- is distracted by noise
- has difficulty tolerating background noise; can't focus
- is very sensitive to noises from other sources (next classroom)
- prefers activities that enable screening of auditory input (paper tearing, door opening and closing, humming)

BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH SENSORY INTEGRATION

- is anxious in new situations because of potential sounds

Hypo-responsive

- does not respond when name is called
- seeks out activities to increase the variety and volume of sound

SMELL/TASTE

Hyper-responsive

- dislikes cleaning days because of the smell of cleanser
- reacts negatively when people wear new smells
- recognizes people by the way they smell
- is sensitive to smell due to allergies
- has difficulty with self-regulation at lunch time when there are many smells
- is anxious in new situations because of the potential smells

Hypo-responsive

- feels excessive need to smell items/people
- likes small spaces, as it is easier to smell others
- is hyposensitive to taste and may snack on crayons, chalk (safety issue)