



## WHAT IS SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER?

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One of the big challenges for teachers is that kids with sensory processing disorder look a lot like kids who have behavioral issues. Children who's level of arousal is too high or too low due to the way they process sensory input can appear inattentive and even defiant. Children who are seeking or avoiding certain types of sensory input can rarely verbalize their needs...all we see in the classroom is distracting behaviors or a refusal to participate in certain activities. But don't worry! Sensory Processing is not as mysterious as it sounds. The resources in this section will help you recognize some of the hall marks of SPD and understand how and why sensory strategies can make a HUGE difference for your students and your classroom.

Sensory processing disorder or SPD is a Neurological disorder causing difficulties with taking in, processing and responding to sensory information about the environment and from within the own body (visual, auditory, tactile, olfaction, gustatory, vestibular and proprioception).

For those with SPD, sensory information may be sensed and perceived in a way that is different from most other people. Unlike blindness or deafness, sensory information can be received by people with SPD, the difference is that information is often registered, interpreted and processed differently by the brain. The result can be unusual ways of responding or behaving, finding things harder to do. Difficulties may typically present as difficulties planning and organizing, problems with doing the activities of everyday life (self care, work and leisure activities), and for some with extreme sensitivity, sensory input may result in extreme avoidance of activities, agitation, distress, fear or confusion.

The term SPD is now often used (though not without controversy) instead of the earlier term sensory integration dysfunction which was originally used by occupational therapist A. Jean Ayres as part of her theory that deficits in the processing and interpretation of sensation from the body and the environment could lead to sensorimotor and learning problems in children.