

Behaviours That Might Be Observed In Children (Or Adults) With Sensory Processing Disorder

Behaviours you might observe in children with sensory sensitivity (over responsivity):

- Increased sensitivity to certain sensations, this could include more than one sense
- Shutting down when there is too much sensory input or avoiding places with a lot of sensory information
- Aggressive or impulsive when overwhelmed by sensory stimulation
- Unsociable, avoiding group activities and showing trouble with forming relationships because of the sensory overload they experience
- Excessively cautious and afraid to try new things as there could be anxiety around the sensory experiences this could include
- Upset by transitions and unexpected changes

Behaviours you might observe in children with slow sensory responses (under responsivity):

- Passive, quiet, withdrawn
- Can find it harder to engage in conversation or other social interactions
- Lost in his or her own fantasy world
- Easily exhausted
- Excessively slow to respond to directions or complete assignments
- Appears to lack the inner drive to be involved in the world around himself or herself (uninterested in exploring games or objects) - often because their sensory systems need a higher intensity of sensory information to respond

Things you might observe in children with who seek out additional sensory information (seekers or cravers):

- Hyperactivity
- Angry or even explosive when he or she is required to sit still or stop what he or she is doing
- Can be more intense, demanding, or hard to calm than others
- Seeks out extra vestibular sensory input and therefore, may create situations others perceive as bad or dangerous.
- Seeks out extra touch and proprioceptive sensory inputs so can appear excessively affectionate.

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Signs of poor sensory discrimination:

- Finds visual discrimination difficult so might avoid puzzles or other visual games.
- Can be frustration when unable to differentiate visual or auditory sensory information.
- Requires directions to be repeated.
- Difficulty following directions; gets lost easily
- Might need for more time than other children to perform assigned tasks.
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Behaviours that may indicate dyspraxia:

- Difficulty learning exercise steps or routines
- Difficulty with hopping, jumping, skipping or running compared to same aged peers
- Difficulty with drawing, colouring or copying
- Difficulty with cutting and pasting
- A preference for fantasy games or talking to actually doing things
- A preference for sedentary activities rather than active play
- Poor skills in ball activities and other sports
- Messy or sloppy eating habits
- A dishevelled appearance
- Frustration when unable to complete tasks due to poor motor skills

Observations that link with postural disorders:

- Seems weaker than other children his or her age
- Poor balance during motor activities
- Difficulty maintaining posture at the desk / table
- Appears lazy
- Appears unmotivated or indifferent
- Appears weak and limp
- Tires easily or appears tired most of the time
- Has difficulty holding his or own in competitive games like tug of war

Reference: Miller, L.J. (2014) Sensational Kids Hope and Help for Children with SPD – Revised: Chapter 1.