

## CHAPTER 4: IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS WITH SENSORY INTEGRATION

### Building Bridges Sensory Screening

#### VESTIBULAR

##### *Hyper-responsive*

- appears fearful of playground equipment
- becomes sick easily in cars, elevators and rides
- appears fearful of heights/stair climbing
- avoids balancing activities
- avoids participation in sports/games

##### *Hypo-responsive*

- seeks fast-moving activities
- engages in frequent spinning, jumping, bouncing and running
- constantly moves their head
- has difficulty staying still

#### TACTILE

##### *Hyper-responsive*

- avoids touch or contact
- dislikes and avoids messy play
- appears to be irritated by clothing or food textures
- becomes irritated if someone is too close

##### *Hypo-responsive*

- constantly touches objects
- seems to have difficulty using an object (pencil) unless it is heavy/textured or vibrates
- constantly mouths objects

#### PROPRIOCEPTIVE

##### *Hypo-responsive*

- exerts too much or too little pressure when handling objects

## BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH SENSORY INTEGRATION

- has difficulty assuming body positions necessary to perform different tasks
- seeks more than typical rough-and-tumble play
- seeks deep pressure by squeezing into tight places
- needs extra-firm pressure to relax when massaging

### VISUAL

#### *Hyper-responsive*

- appears uncomfortable in sunlight or strong light
- appears sensitive to changes in lighting
- has difficulty looking at screens
- has difficulty watching faces
- moves their fingers in front of their eyes constantly
- likes to watch falling items

#### *Hypo-responsive*

- notices visual differences
- focuses on shadows, reflections and spinning objects
- seeks out new visual sensations

### AUDITORY

#### *Hyper-responsive*

- becomes upset with loud or unexpected sounds
- hums or sings to screen out unwanted sounds
- dislikes certain sounds (vacuum, hair dryer)

#### *Hypo-responsive*

- seeks out sound
- turns up the volume on electronic devices/the TV

### OLFACTORY (SMELL) / GUSTATORY (TASTE)

#### *Hyper-responsive*

- dislikes strong smells or tastes

## CHAPTER 4: IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS WITH SENSORY INTEGRATION

- has a limited food repertoire
- gags at the sight/smell of certain foods

### *Hypo-responsive*

- frequently has his/her hands in his/her pants
- smears his/her feces
- eats non-edible foods
- seeks out new smells/tastes



## BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH SENSORY INTEGRATION

### Identifying Difficulties in Self-Care Skills

#### General Self-Care Checklist

#### TOUCH

##### *Hyper-responsive*

- has difficulty tolerating the touch of a facecloth/towel
- rubs spots that were touched
- seems to accept touch within a predictable routine
- dislikes the feel of the toothbrush
- complains that the toothbrush/hairbrush hurts him/her
- reacts aggressively to touch
- often strips clothing/takes off shoes and socks
- has difficulty tolerating temperature changes
- has difficulty with nail care

##### *Hypo-responsive*

- seeks out touch; loves to feel textures on body
- feels textures with his/her mouth

#### PROPRIOCEPTION

##### *Hypo-responsive*

- constantly drops objects
- applies too much/not enough pressure with objects of self care (squeezes toothpaste so that too much comes out or lacks enough pressure to remove the cap)
- really enjoys the shower, rough toweling or firm hair brushing
- seems unable to change body position to accommodate the task (e.g., expresses difficulty getting into the tub)

#### VESTIBULAR

##### *Hyper-responsive*

- demonstrates resistance to a change in head position (difficulty leaning back to have hair rinsed)

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- prefers to hold head upright
- gets disoriented following a change in head position
- has difficulty weight shifting to balance for a change in position (bending down to dry his/her feet)
- has difficulty bending over the sink to spit out toothpaste
- seems fearful of sitting on the toilet, especially when feet are off the ground

### VISUAL

#### *Hyper-responsive*

- has difficulty tolerating the reflection of light off the water or shiny sink
- prefers to keep the light off
- over focuses on a visual event in the room, like a closing door
- has difficulty guiding movement in front of a mirror (get distracted by the mirror)

#### *Hypo-responsive*

- has difficulty finding visual items on busy backgrounds
- seems fascinated with changing visuals (bubbles, dripping water)

### AUDITORY

#### *Hyper-responsive*

- gets upset by loud noises (toilets flushing, water running, hairdryer)
- hums or sings to screen out incoming auditory input
- gets easily distracted by sound
- covers ears with hands to screen the louder, more hollow sounds of the bathroom
- struggles with the sound in the bathroom, so that self care skills have to be completed outside the bathroom

#### *Hypo-responsive*

- enjoys loud sounds and repeat them often (flushing toilet)
- likes the echo of the bathroom

### SMELL/TASTE

#### *Hyper-responsive*

- has poor tolerance of fragrance in soap and shampoo

## BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH SENSORY INTEGRATION

- has difficulty tolerating toothpaste
- smears feces
- holds nose/gag during toileting

### *Hypo-responsive*

- seems not to notice smells
- smears feces
- craves strong tastes; eats soap/toothpaste

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- is sedentary; prefers sitting tasks
- has difficulty staying still
- has difficulty staying in one place long enough to complete a task
- fidgets
- has strong desire for movement, even during a task
- constantly shifts in position during seated activities

## EMOTIONAL/BEHAVIORAL

- demonstrates poor confidence
- has difficulty planning the action even though the task is understood
- exhibits poor self-esteem
- requires more preparation and support through an activity
- seems immature
- can be overly sensitive to criticism
- acts fearful/anxious
- has difficulty with transitions
- requires predictability in effort to compensate for poor planning skills and sensory defensiveness
- gets easily frustrated
- has difficulty with rhythms of the body - sleeping, hunger, elimination
- has difficulty with self-regulation
- has difficulty interacting with and making friends



## BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH SENSORY INTEGRATION

### Eating Checklist

#### TOUCH

##### *Hyper-responsive*

- prefers food of consistent texture and temperature
- dislikes 'surprise' textures in foods (e.g., a noodle in the soup)
- gags when the texture of food is changed or even perceived to be changed
- has a very limited diet because of sensitivity to food textures
- has difficulty tolerating utensils in the mouth; prefers to eat finger foods
- drinks frequently during eating to wash food out of the mouth
- uses only fingertips when eating, has difficulty tolerating touch inside the hand
- is a picky eater
- has difficulty tolerating temperature changes in food
- often eats one type of food at a time
- demonstrates food preferences that become more limited in times of anxiety
- can't tolerate any food on lips, cheeks or chin

##### *Hypo-responsive*

- seeks out food and non-food objects to explore texture
- presents a safety concern; decreased processing of touch can lead to choking as the child may not feel the food reaching the back of the throat
- does not feel food on face
- demonstrates poor awareness of pain and temperature in the mouth

#### PROPRIOCEPTION

##### *Hypo-responsive*

- prefers chewy or crunchy foods to increase sensory input (fruit chews or chips)
- does not chew foods well (safety issue: choking)
- fatigues easily, especially during meals with a lot of chewing
- has difficulty maintaining posture to eat

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- has decreased force in bite (may not be able to bite into an apple or chew meat)
- props body up using a hand under the chin or leans the head on the arm/body to stabilize posture for eating

### VESTIBULAR

#### *Hyper-responsive*

- has difficulty with sitting balance
- has difficulty maintaining attention to the task when the head position changes to accommodate the fork/spoon
- has difficulty stabilizing vision to guide eating

#### *Hypo-responsive*

- needs movement; frequently stands up then sits down while eating
- needs to swing feet during eating
- constantly shifts position in the chair
- fatigues easily

### VISUAL

#### *Hyper-responsive*

- becomes overwhelmed by the colors and patterns of food, plate and tablecloth
- has difficulty guiding movement with the eyes as the eyes prefer to look at an unchanging object
- is distracted by visual input
- hangs head close to food to block out extra visual input

#### *Hypo-responsive*

- has difficulty finding food/cutlery against a busy background
- adds items to plate to increase visual interest
- moves items on plate around to increase visual interest

### AUDITORY

#### *Hyper-responsive*

- gets distracted by the noise of the food, utensils, people talking
- dislikes the sound of other people chewing

## BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH SENSORY INTEGRATION

- dislikes the sound of chewing from themselves
- has difficulty eating when someone else is eating or talking

### *Hypo-responsive*

- seeks out more sound when chewing/drinking

## SMELL/TASTE

### *Hyper-responsive*

- has difficulty with some tastes/odors
- gags easily when confronted with certain smells/tastes
- tolerates a narrow range of foods
- is very hesitant to try new foods
- is a poor eater
- becomes upset with the smell of food as it is cooking
- has strong preferences for some foods and wants to have them at every meal
- has difficulty eating out or at school, as the smells of the food of other people may not be tolerated

### *Hypo-responsive*

- exhibits pica (chewing and eating non-edible items)
- seems not to smell things; is not motivated to eat because there is no taste
- seeks out the food of others



## 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

## CHAPTER 4: IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS WITH SENSORY INTEGRATION

- 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 stim 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)

## CHAPTER 4: IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS WITH SENSORY INTEGRATION

### Play Checklist

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#### TOUCH

##### *Hyper-responsive*

- prefers predictable touch, as the expectation helps harness attention and improve processing
- dislikes getting messy
- avoids arts and crafts, cooking, gardening
- does not use the whole hand; prefers to use fingertips
- reacts aggressively to touch by others
- mouths objects if the hands are overly sensitive to touch
- has a strong preference for certain textures in toys
- chooses predictable toys to prevent surprises
- prefers dry to wet/dirty play
- uses toys differently than intended; may be used for a sensory purpose, not a play purpose
- prefers solitary play to play in small groups

##### *Hypo-responsive*

- feels excessive need to touch objects and people
- has decreased awareness of pain and temperature
- seeks out play with a lot of tactile input

#### PROPRIOCEPTION

##### *Hypo-responsive*

- prefers gross motor toys to manipulative because of the full body motion
- seems to have weak muscles
- tires easily
- has a weak grasp
- is unable to grade movement
- seems accident prone
- seems to enjoy falling and crashing

## BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH SENSORY INTEGRATION

- doesn't easily change body position in relation to the toy or the play
- drops pieces of the toy or uses excessive/not enough force when playing with the toy
- does not play with the toy appropriately; may use it for a sensory purpose
- chews on toys to increase attention and/or postural stability
- 'locks' joints in order to maintain position
- has poor endurance
- prefers sedentary activities

### VESTIBULAR

#### *Hyper-responsive*

- becomes fearful when the feet leave the ground
- dislikes being upside down
- avoids playground activities
- avoids play activities which call for movement
- uses eyes to compensate for balance challenges

#### *Hypo-responsive*

- has an excessive need for movement
- has difficulty adjusting the body to prepare for changes in position
- creates self movement through rocking
- constantly shifts in chair
- takes risks in movement

### VISUAL

#### *Hyper-responsive*

- is uncomfortable in bright light; prefers to be in the dark
- concentrates on detail and is unable to see the 'whole picture'
- gets lost easily
- hesitates going up/down stairs
- prefers smaller spaces
- prefers less visually stimulating activities

## CHAPTER 4: IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS WITH SENSORY INTEGRATION

### *Hypo-responsive*

- has excessive interest in moving, spinning, patterned movements
- has difficulty putting puzzles together
- loses their place when reading
- has difficulty visually tracking or finding an object against a busy background
- gets lost easily
- has trouble matching and sorting

## AUDITORY

### *Hyper-responsive*

- is defensive about sound; covers ears
- startles easily with loud, unexpected sound
- constantly makes sound to block out other sounds (humming)
- stops playing in the presence of unfamiliar sounds
- is easily distracted by sounds
- has difficulty participating in social play

### *Hypo-responsive*

- is fascinated by certain sounds and repeats them often
- seeks out new sounds/volumes

## SMELL/TASTE

### *Hyper-responsive*

- dislikes new toys that have a strong smell

### *Hypo-responsive*

- smells or tastes toys prior to play



# BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH SENSORY INTEGRATION

## **Social Skills Checklist**

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### **TOUCH**

#### ***Hyper-responsive***

- isolates self from touch by others
- dislikes crowds and groups of children for fear of being bumped/touched
- reacts aggressively when bumped/touched by others
- has difficulty tolerating hugs, kisses and signs of affection
- has difficulty playing with others in close proximity
- can be self-injurious
- needs predictability in touch to harness attention to process it better

#### ***Hypo-responsive***

- seeks out deep pressure and frequently bumps into others
- exhibits excessive touching of objects and people

### **PROPRIOCEPTION**

#### ***Hypo-responsive***

- plays rough in an effort to gain more input
- seeks out deep pressure, hugs
- squeezes self into small spaces (to increase the deep pressure input)
- exerts too much/not enough pressure when giving a handshake
- performs excessive clapping crashing and other pressure-seeking behaviors
- can be self-injurious

### **VESTIBULAR**

#### ***Hyper-responsive***

- avoids movement
- body moves as a unit; can't move head independently of body
- balance challenges can make moving toward or standing beside another difficult

## CHAPTER 4: IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS WITH SENSORY INTEGRATION

- can become dizzy watching other children
- becomes anxious in an environment full of movement; may stand near the wall
- does not play movement-based games with others

### *Hypo-responsive*

- craves movement
- becomes excited when there is a lot of movement in the activity

## VISUAL

### *Hyper-responsive*

- is more comfortable in the dark
- looks intensely at objects/people
- finds eye contact very stressful and therefore avoids it
- cannot process or tolerate color in different intensities
- squints
- prefers to wear a hat/glasses
- stares off into space
- looks at a familiar object

### *Hypo-responsive*

- has difficulty reading facial expression/social cues
- has difficulty visually scanning to find friends in class or on the playground
- has difficulty locating and keeping friends in the visual field, especially in a busy environment
- doesn't use eyes to guide movement

## AUDITORY

### *Hyper-responsive*

- is over sensitive to sounds from others
- constantly hums and sings to screen out environmental noise
- dislikes crowds and noisy places
- covers ears

## BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH SENSORY INTEGRATION

### *Hypo-responsive*

- appears not to hear sounds, even his/her own name
- seeks out sounds in variety and volume

## SMELL/TASTE

### *Hyper-responsive*

- overreacts to new people, new scents
- breathes through their sleeve, as it is a familiar smell
- smells a familiar smell during a transition

### *Hypo-responsive*

- prefers a small space so that it is easier to smell others
- sniffs or licks an object or a person to interact or to discover more about him/her/it

