

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

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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)

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Play Checklist

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

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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

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

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- ☐ 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

