

What is sensory processing?

Sensory Processing is the way in which the brain receives, interprets and responds to information. Sensory processing difficulties occur when sensory information gets to the brain but it is disorganised whether the information is being poorly detected or adjusted or regulated which impacts all areas. This ability to process sensory information will vary day to day, often depending on how we are feeling (for example if we are feeling stressed, tired, unwell, or in a positive mood). Our sensory responses are dynamic and ever changing. There is a constant balance of being over or under responsive and it can be difficult to receive the 'just right' amount of input.

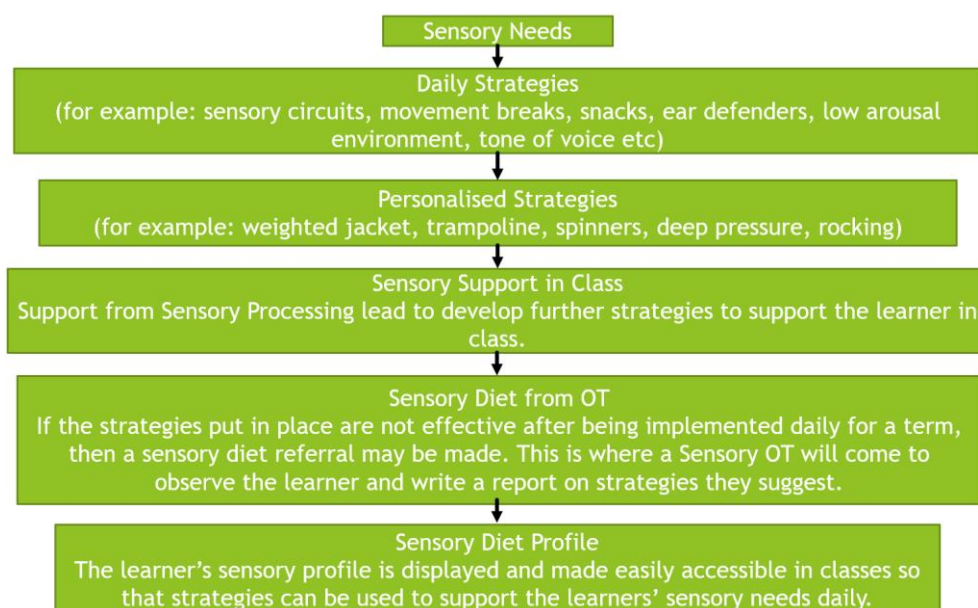
What are the 8 senses and some needs or difficulties our learners might face?

Humans have 8 senses, the 5 most common or known senses are taste, touch, sight, smell and hearing. The other 3 senses that may be less well known are vestibular (awareness of our movement, balance, and coordination), proprioceptive (body awareness and position in the space around us) and interoceptive (our internal sensory system that tells us what is happening inside our body (e.g. hunger, needing the toilet, fatigue, emotions, etc)).

Our learners can be much more or less sensitive to sensory experiences than other people. They may seek out, avoid or become overwhelmed by sounds, lights, smells, tastes and textures, or face challenges with other senses. The difficulties often come from experiencing Hyper-sensitivity – this means they are much more sensitive than other people. They may avoid or become irritated or distressed by too much sensory input. Too much input can lead to 'sensory overload'. They may also enjoy their sensitivity to favourite sensory inputs. Or they may experience Hypo-sensitivity – this means they are much less sensitive than other people. They may not notice sensory inputs and may become bored, frustrated or distressed by too little sensory input. They may seek out more intense sensory experiences in order to get more input.

Some people have a mixed and/or varying sensory experience, including both hyper-sensitivity and hypo-sensitivity. This can mean you have different levels of sensitivity in different senses, or even to different inputs within the same sense. Their sensitivity may vary over time, in different environments or due to other factors, such as your mental and physical health.

Sensory Support at Baytree



Sensory Diet

The aim of sensory diet is to prevent sensory and emotional overload by meeting nervous system's sensory needs. Knowing a learner's sensory profile can support them when they are overwhelmed or need reassurance, however, they should be engaging in sensory experiences on a regular schedule to ensure they feel comfortable and in control. It can take several weeks to determine the effectiveness of sensory strategies/equipment. Sensory diets vary day to day e.g. like hunger and so the needed sensory input (amount and how often) will depend on fatigue, changes in routine, health etc.

How Baytree can support Sensory Processing Needs at home

If you are concerned or have any questions about your child's sensory needs then please get in touch with your child's teacher who can offer specific advice or strategies which can help your child regulate their sensory needs.

Additional Information

An Introduction to Sensory Processing -

https://import.cdn.thinkific.com/uploads/private/952668/hiE8EISR1exy4vS7ZXNA_Sensory%20Processing%20An%20Introduction%20NSN.pdf?verify=1773139033-Qk4gaZS%2FsAkaoo4dvAlo2t%2FcNwXeil%2B2Vf9w%2BcOtHkg%3D

Immersive Video on how sensory overwhelm may feel for our learners:

<https://youtu.be/aPknwW8mPAM>

Sirona Sensory Processing Webinar <https://sirona-cic.org.uk/children-services/services/occupational-therapy-resources-and-links/>

National Autistic Society – Sensory Processing <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/about-autism/sensory-processing>