

Chapter 6

Sensory Processing

IDENTIFYING PATTERNS AND DESIGNING SUPPORT STRATEGIES

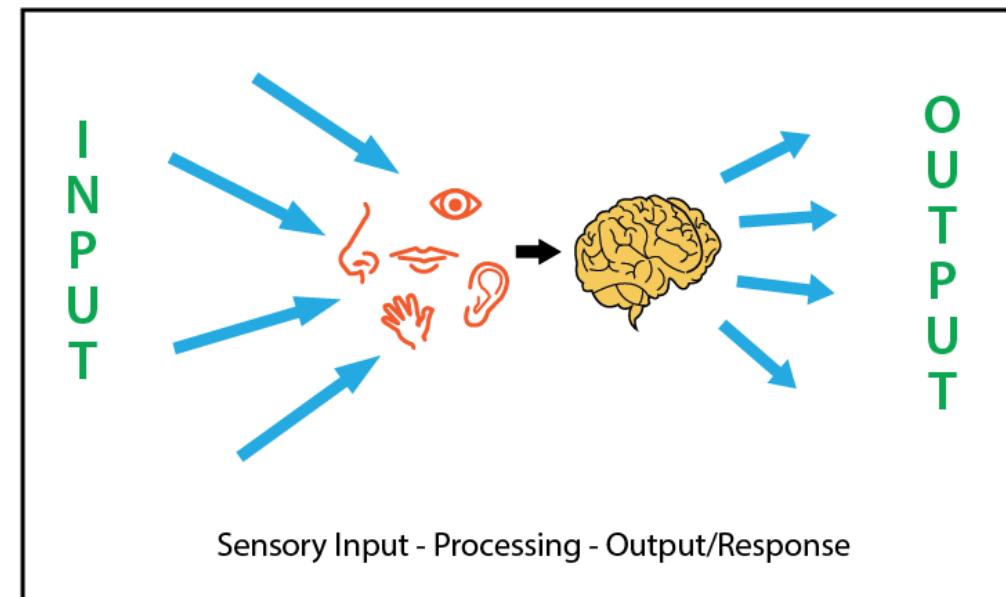
BY PERMISSION OF: ALYSSA KRISHART

What is Sensory Processing

A person's way of noticing and responding to sensory events that occur during everyday.

There are particular patterns of sensory processing and these patterns affect how people respond in situation.

People on the autism spectrum have more intense reactions to certain sensory input. Which could result in different processing, output and response.



Watch this video for a look into a sensory room for student with ASD...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9j6rQ4rtQY>

We all have our own sensory Processing pattern

Wearing certain clothes

- I only wear black socks.
- I do not like decorative socks with all those strings in them.

Sound

- When you want to turn the TV volume up or down.
- When too many sounds are playing at once and you can't concentrate.
- Some people are sensitive to high pitched noise

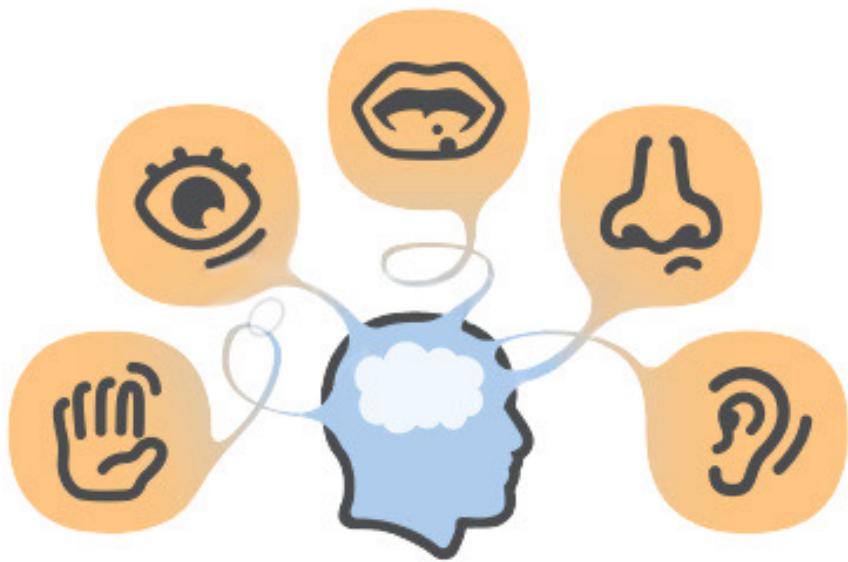
Add Salt and Pepper

- Some people must add salt and/or pepper to all of their meals

Sensitivity to light

- I have a hard time in the morning adjusting to light. Therefore, I dim the lights, squint my eyes and put drops in my eyes before I can fully adjust.

Sensory Processing System



Touch- somatosensory

Body position- proprioceptive

Movement- vestibular

Sight- visual

Taste- gustatory

Smell- olfactory

Hearing- auditory

One can react to many of these sensory processing systems in many different ways...

Touch- somatosensory

Some students with ASD like touch

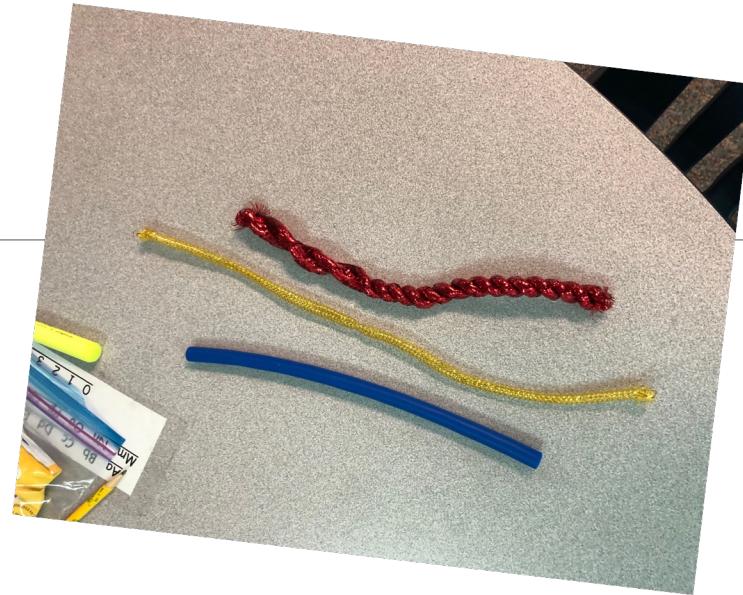
- They enjoy affection from others.
- Some like different textures such as rough, smooth, slimy, gritty,
- Touch can include the texture of their clothes. Some students with ASD will only wear certain types of clothes. This goes with Halloween that just passed. Not all students with ASD will even put on a full costume like their peers.

Some students with ASD do NOT like to be touched AT ALL!! They will let you know right away if they do not want to be touched.

- When asking several of my students for a hug they may turn their body so their back is facing me. Then they allow me to give them a hug. Others have given me a head butt, or just put their body against mine with their hands to their side. I have to show them to open their arms to give hugs.

Touch- somatosensory

Providing fidgets is not always a bad thing! I provide them until they are too distracting to their learning and learning of others. These are a few items that my students use in my room when needed.



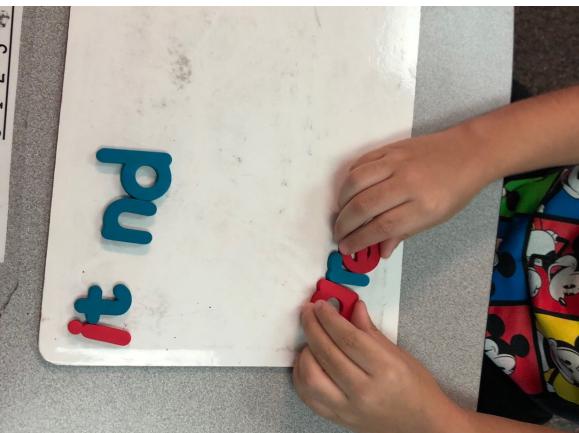
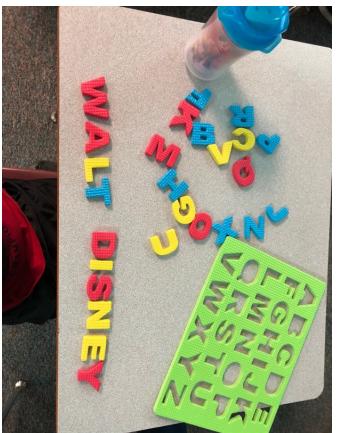
When I was in college I had a teacher provide Play-Doh for us. It was a night class and it helped stay awake. She was on OT major and explained to us that manipulating something with your hands can activate your brain to help retain information being taught.



Touch- somatosensory

Provide students with:

- Rough and varied textures in your sensory corner, work surfaces, or seats.
- Encourage them to touch new things. I had my students touch the inside of a pumpkin for Halloween (some did not like it but other did).
- I believe in providing opportunities to try new things within my room. Some students may not participate in these opportunities. Last year we had therapy dogs come into our classroom. Some students loved petting the dogs and some refused to go near them but enjoyed looking at them.
- Some students are kinesthetic learners. I provide letters for my students to help them learn their sight words.
- I have a student who likes to have something at the table while learning. He is constantly touching things. I provide him with hard magnetic letter and foam letters.



Body position- proprioceptive

Watch this link to learn more about the proprioceptive system..... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2iOliN3fAE>



Many students with ASD seek body input to regulate their emotional and behavioral responses!

I provide some flexible seating in my classroom. Some seating works better with others. I provide a bumpy, smooth, flat, or standing seating.



Sometimes my students seek input with a weighted blanket.



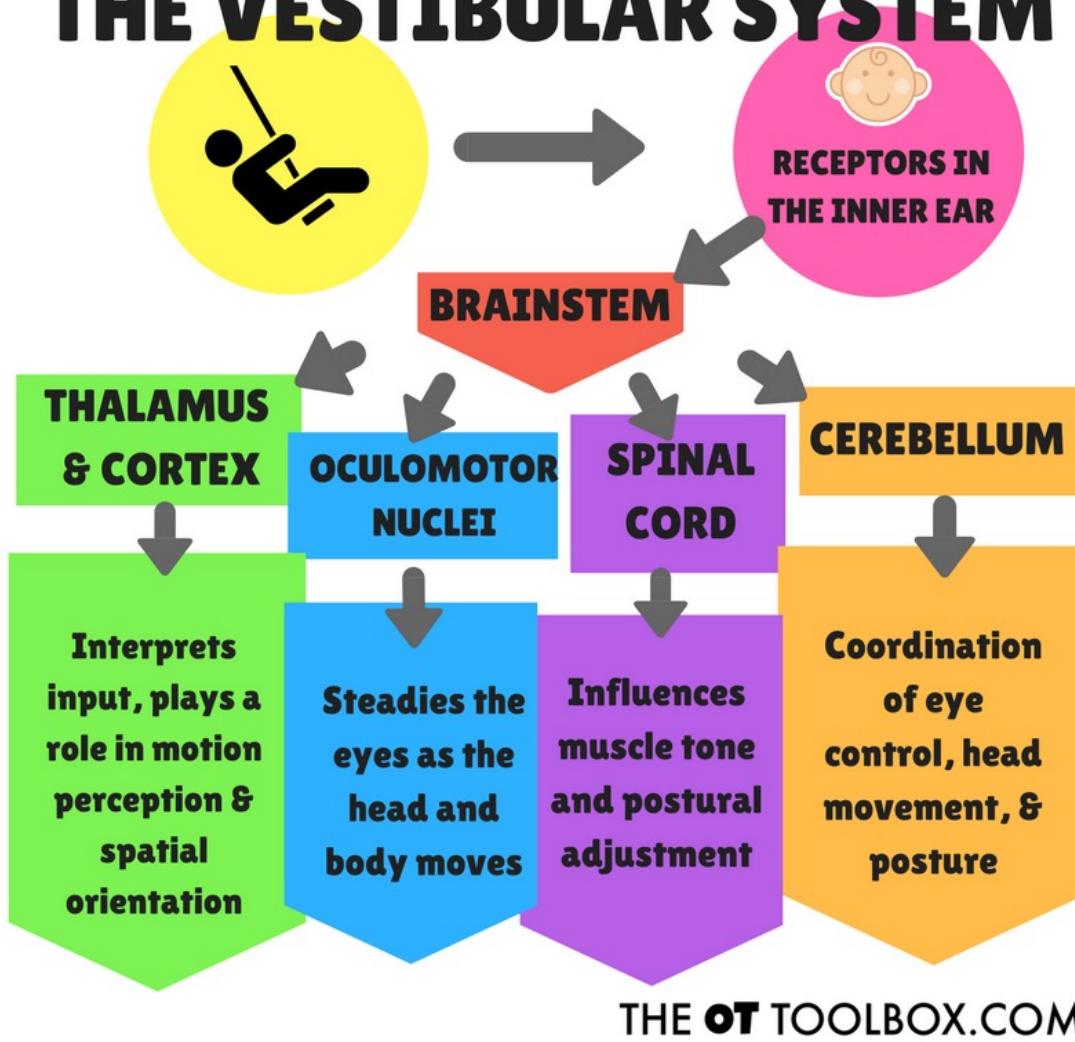
I have provided a compression vest for students who are seeking constant input.



Some students like their arms, legs, and even their head to be squeezed as well



THE VESTIBULAR SYSTEM



Movement- vestibular

Students with ASD that bounce and spin may be trying to stimulate their vestibular system (their inner ear)!

Vestibular activities can be calming for over-responsive or sensory seeking children or stimulating for under-responsive.

I provide a lot of movement for my kids as does OT!

She works on a lot of cross body movements, balance, and fine motor for my students.

Here is a link to watch more about vestibular activities for kids with ASD...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koyAIN3xU3w>

Sight- visual

Light sensitivity! It's a thing! The florescent lights in classrooms are horrible for everyone's eyes. I have blue covers on my lighting and do not turn on all of my lights. Add some natural light in the room and it makes for a cool setting.

Natural light is amazing light to have. I provide some natural light in my room. My teammate opens her blinds fully in her classroom. Do what is best for your students.

Some students have difficulty attending visually. Sometimes when there is too much going on in a worksheet. This causes them to have sensory overload and not concentrate on what needs to be concentrated on. It might be best to cover it up with a plain white sheet of paper. Sometimes there are too many colors in a photo as well. This can cause sensory overload →

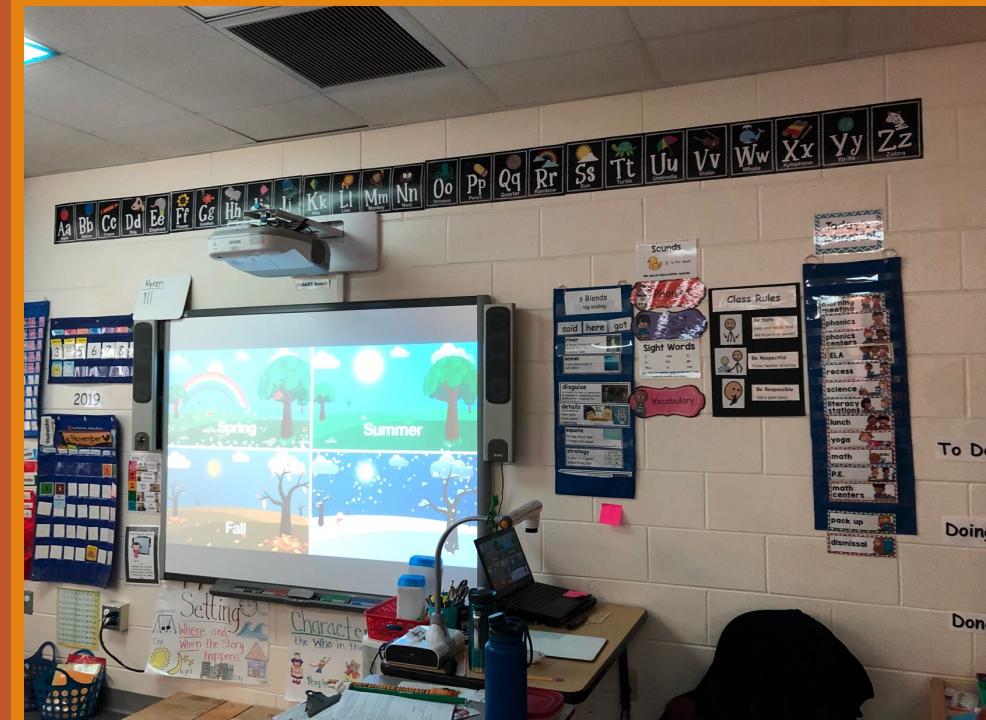


Sight-Visual

Some students are distracted by items on the walls. In my room I have many resources on my wall. This includes anchor charts, the alphabet, numbers, the calendar, 100's chart, my behavior chart, the schedule and what we are learning.

I believe in a print rich environment. My current students can handle all of these resources on my walls without distracting them. I notice it enriches their learning. As we are counting or doing the calendar, they are looking at it as we go.

Visuals visuals visuals!!!! They help students with ASD we just have to make sure we provide the correct ones.



Taste- gustatory

Students with ASD can be VERY picky in what they eat. They usually eat certain food items and refuse to try anything else.

Some students may only eat crunchy food items such as chips or pretzels.

Some students may like food items at a certain temperature and flavor.

It is best to provide a variety of foods for them to try or just be exposed to the looks of them. I do this per parent request with most of my students.

I am also a server at Chili's! I have regulars that come in their son who has autism. He does not get a drink but will order the same thing every time he comes in. He likes the grilled chicken breast with French fries. He needs a lot of ketchup for his dinner as well!

Children with autism likes food items a certain way just like neurotypicals do. When I sure a grown man who ordered a well done steak and he gets a rare steak he isn't going to be happy with his meal. Therefore, he should ask nicely for a new steak and move on.

When a food item doesn't come out right for a child with autism they may have a melt down because they cannot communicate what is wrong with their food.

Smell- olfactory

This sensory is still understudied.

I use essential oils within my room. Essential oils not only benefit neurotypical but also students with ASD. I have researched different oils that best benefit students with ASD.

I use these oils in my diffuser in my classroom:

Vetiver (calming smells like burning wood)

Cedarwood (improve oxygenation of brain cells)

Lavender (helps anxiety and allergies)

Orange (lifting mood and reducing stress)

Lemongrass (relieve stress and anxiety)

Frankincense (may help stress)

Peppermint (respiratory)

Eucalypts (congestion, asthma, for the smell) ☺

Tea Tree

Sometimes rosemary (headaches, helps immune system)

I will combine:

Tea Tree with Lemongrass, peppermint, or eucalypts

Vetiver with orange or lemon

Cedarwood with orange or lemongrass

Frankincense with peppermint or Eucalypts

Peppermint with Lemongrass

Lavender with Lemongrass





Hearing- auditory

Some students with ASD have hypersensitive to hearing. These can be loud and/or piercing sounds. This will cause them to cover their ears or hum to self-regulate.

When I have a student who is closing their ears for a while. I will give them noise canceling headphones. This will help with this sensory input that is overloading them and allow them to do the work needed.

My students wear them daily in the lunch room and P.E. Our P.E. is sometimes inside in a very loud room.

I try to keep my videos at a low volume. I noticed it is only a few videos that bother them such as the beginning of Storybots. When speaking to them I also try to remember to use a soft voice. Yelling will get you nowhere with kids with autism.

A must watch if you haven't already...

I have watched this video more than once. It always puts things more into perspective to the way our kids with autism feel. It is a very interesting insight on a teenager with autism. She will let you know how she feels!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMBzJleeOno>

*note the title does not have child first language but besides that it is a very good video.

Always

Unique

Totally

Interesting

SOMETIMES

MYSTERIOUS

