

# Welcome and Introduction

- My Name?
- What might you get from today's talk?



# Making sense of your child's behaviour

- You can observe your child's behaviour and actions but it is only through your interpretation that you can understand what may lie behind it.
- Correct understanding of what you see allows you to use the appropriate strategies or ideas to help your child
- Behaviour may be a result of many different factors such as reinforced habits, copying others, needing their world to be predictable, emotional highs and lows and also responding to the sensations around them.

# Sensory Processing

At each moment a person takes in information from the environment or his/her own body and must screen what is important to organise him or herself to act on the environment



# Sensory Modulation

**Our ability to adjust our perception and adapt to sensations**



- Children with difficulties modulating sensory input cannot sift the ‘important’ information
- They have difficulty adjusting to a situation
- They don’t like change

# Sensory Registration

## Our response and degree of sensitivity to different sensations

- Can be oversensitive
- Can be under responsive
- Influenced by other factors eg tiredness or anxiety

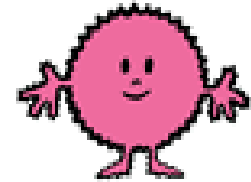


# The Senses

- **Sight** (Visual System)
- **Taste** (Gustatory System)
- **Sound** (Auditory System)
- **Smell** (Olfactory System)
- **Touch** (Tactile System)
- **Movement** (Vestibular System)
- **Sense of body position** (Proprioceptive System)

# Tactile System

## sense of touch



- Two systems; protective and discriminative
- Protective system responds to light or unexpected touch
- Discriminative tells you where and what is being touched
- Work together in balance to protect us and adapt to different sensation from the skin
- Contributes to the development of the body scheme

# Proprioceptive System –

sense of body position

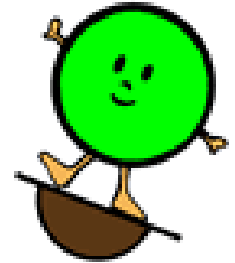


- Gives information to the brain about where body parts are and what they are doing
- Allow automatic adjustment of body, grading of force and skilful manipulation
- Makes it possible for a child to skilfully guide their limbs without having to observe every action
- Gives us a sense of organised self both mechanical and emotional



# Vestibular System

## sense of movement

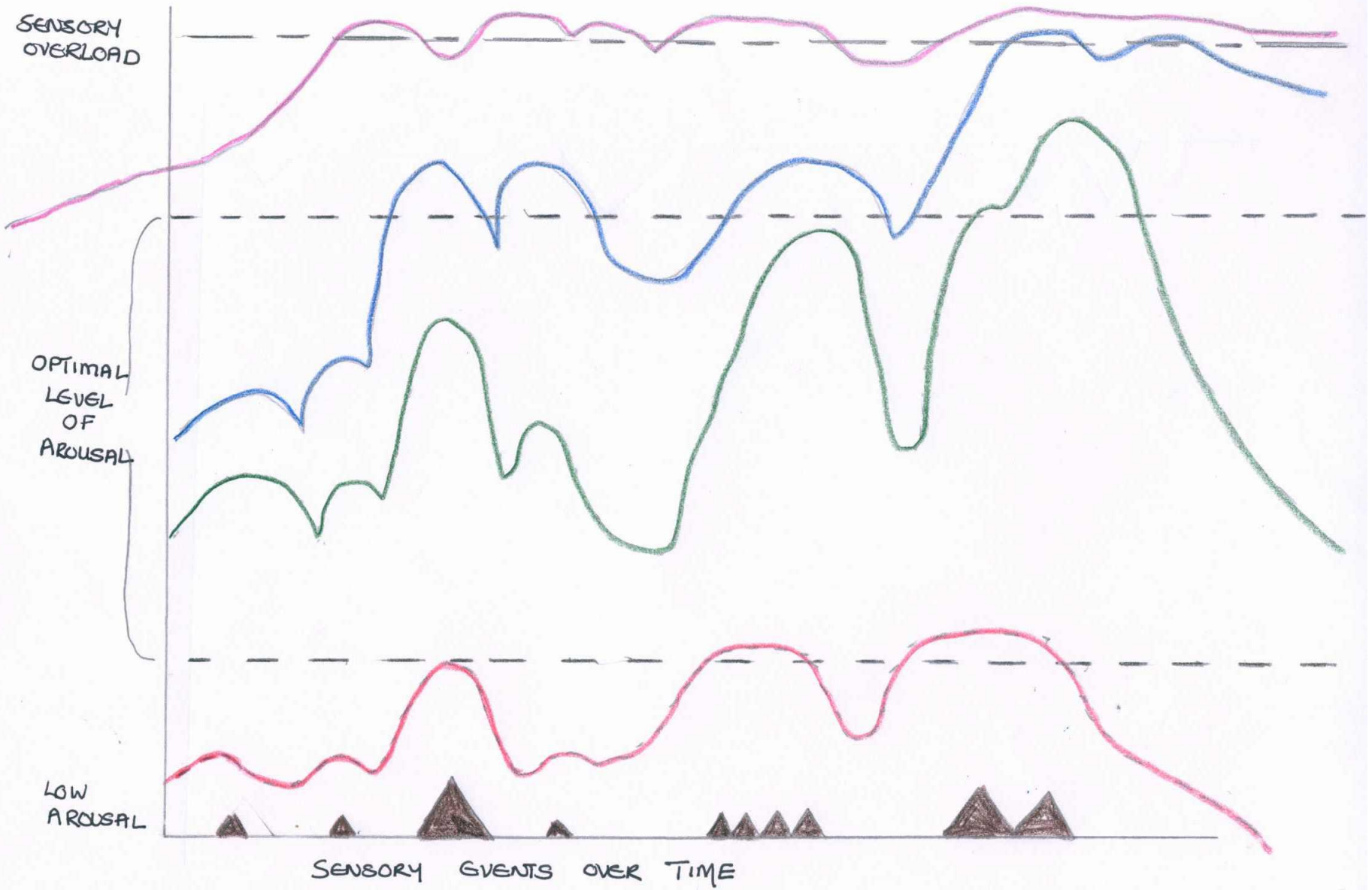


- Is our balance and movement sense
- Detects movement and changes in head position
- Organises body against gravity –tells us whether we are moving and how fast
- Our sense of movement is closely linked with the visual system
- Influences muscle tone, posture and coordination



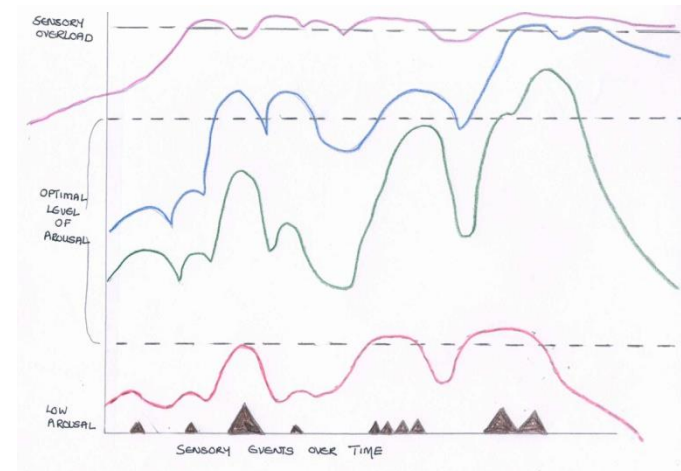
# Self Regulation

- Arousal/alertness varies throughout the day
- Self regulation of arousal is the ability to adjust your level of alertness appropriately to the situation
- Different individuals have varying levels of alertness that are 'normal' for themselves



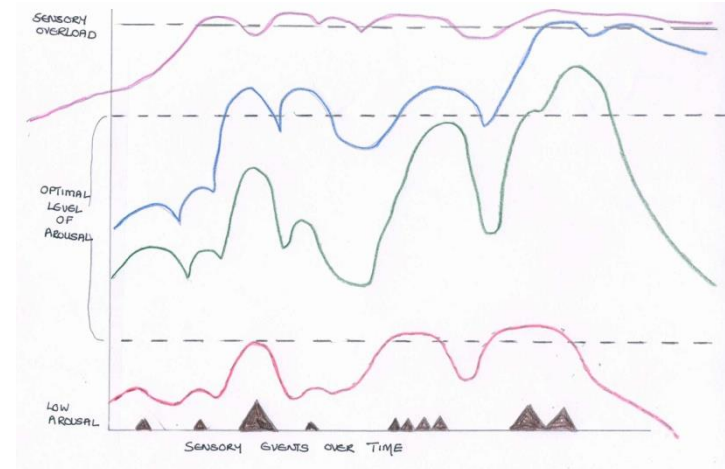
# Sensory Avoiding Behaviours

- Resistant to change
- Reliant on rigid rituals
- Finds it difficult to pay attention
- Disruptive
- Often stubborn and uncooperative
- Withdrawn
- Likes to be in control
- Prefers sedentary activities
- Avoids touch and touching
- Anxious and easily frustrated



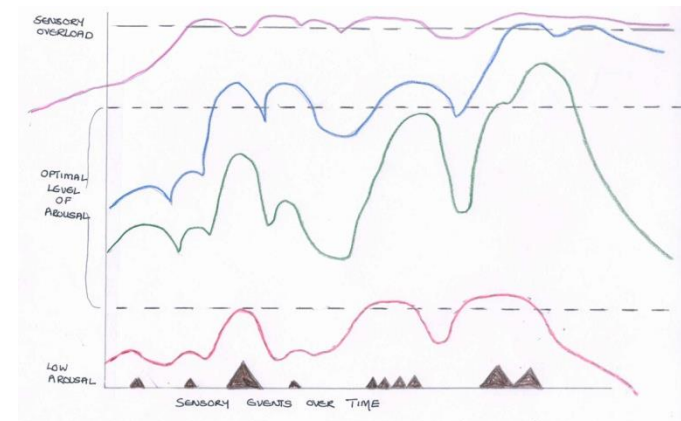
# The Sensory Defensive child

Some children are overly sensitive to loud noises, excessive amounts of visual input, unexpected touch, certain type of movement, unsteady surfaces and certain types of food and textures



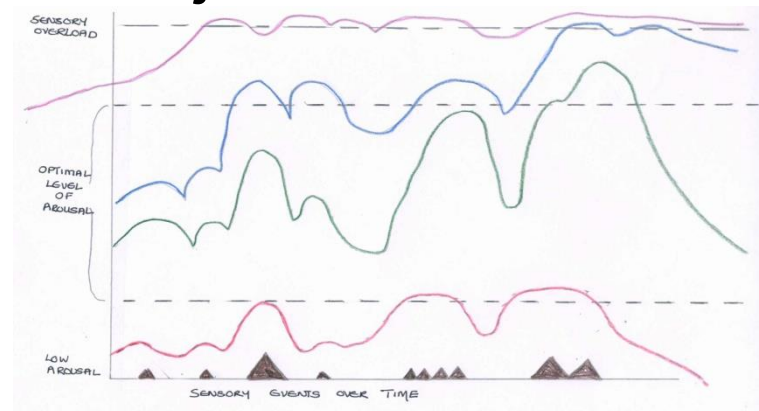
# Poor Registration

- Inattentive
- Withdrawn
- Flat affect
- Generally not reacting to environment
- Often won't answer when called
- The child should seek sensory input in order to increase arousal levels but does not.



# Sensory Seeking Behaviours

- On the move
- Fidgety
- Inattentive
- Constantly touching people and objects
- Jumps from one activity to another
- Crashes and bumps into objects
- Excitable
- Easily distracted
- Makes strange noises



# Sensory Processing affects our Activities of Daily Living

- Dressing
- Eating
- Hair, care and hygiene – general guidelines
- Hair brushing
- Hair cutting
- Play
- Sleep
- Teeth brushing
- Toileting
- Washing



# Dressing



- Textures
- Overload of other stimuli whilst dressing
- Mirror-visual
- Break down activity-backward chaining
- Cut labels
- Unscented detergent and fabric softener
- Organise drawers and wardrobe
- Colour code for left and right

# Eating

- Textures/temperature
- Clean out mouth between mouth-fulls
- Prepare for eating- toothbrush, massage, pressure
- Oral motor play activities
- Slowly increase choices
- Weighted vest



# Hair Brushing

- Use brush with large head
- Use firm strokes
- Brush in front of mirror
- Have child brush own hair
- Massage scalp prior to brushing
- Use conditioner to de-tangle
- With tangles start at the bottom of hair
- Cut hair short



# Hair Cutting

- Use mirror and verbal warnings to prepare
- Ear phones to cut out sound of scissors/clippers
- Downward pressure through head, neck, shoulders
- Use visual aids and social stories
- Follow with enjoyable activity/treat



# Sleeping

- Massage prior to bed
- Heavy blanket
- Sleeping bag
- Smooth bed sheet
- Bed tent
- Night light with warm glow
- Dark blinds
- Back rubs etc
- Calming down routine before bed.



# Teeth Brushing

- If sensitive, consider flannel to wipe teeth
- Apply pressure to teeth and gums
- Mild flavoured tooth paste
- Electric tooth brush
- Tooth paste in pump dispenser



# Washing



- Unscented soap
- Heavy flannel with pressure strokes
- Dim lights and sounds if a problem
- When shampooing apply pressure to head
- Use pressure when drying with towel
- Prepare child verbally for touch
- Use mirror + name parts of body
- Use 'we will wash your right arm and then your left.'
- Visual aids

# General Guidelines to help with Activities of Daily Living

- Self-imposed touch is easier to process than touch by others
- Use Visual Aids (schedules, symbol cards)
- Use Communication supports (social stories)
- Consistency = predictability
- Organised environment
- Calming strategies specific to your child
- Pressure touch is more organising than light touch
- Minimise other sensory input





# Alerting Sensory Input

## Movement:

- Fast unpredictable movement is alerting
- Fast swinging
- Bouncing on ball, mini trampoline
- Running tag games, hide and seek, running errands
- Cold water play

## Oral:

- Drinking ice cold water or fizzy drinks
- Crunchy food

## Smell:

- Strong odours



## Tactile:

- Misting cold water from spray in face
- Fresh cool air
- Vibration (massage cushion etc.)

## Auditory:

- Loud, fast music and sudden noise

## Visual:

- Cause and effect toys with sounds and lights
- Bright lights
- Visually stimulating rooms

# Organising Sensorv Input

## Oral:

- Sucking sweets or using a curly straw
- Chewing, blowing
- Chewing granola or fruit bars, dried fruit, gums, resistive chewing: chew tubes, “chewelry”
- Blow Toys, blowing bubbles



## Movement:

- Swimming
- Adding rhythm to an activity
- Hanging from a trapeze or monkey bar
- Pushing or pulling heavy loads
- Inverted positions
- Adding deep pressure within an activity



# Calming Sensory Input

## Tactile & Proprioception:

- Deep, firm pressure is most effective
- Joint compression
- Stretches
- Snuggling in bean bag/pillow
- Blanket wrap
- Lycra clothing
- Fidget toys



## Visual:

- Lights off

## Oral:

- Sucking

## Auditory:

- Quiet corner
- Reduced noise
- White noise or noise with a steady beat



## Movement:

- Slow swinging
- Slower, rhythmic movement is CALMING
- Slow rocking in a rocking chair or something similar

# Calming and Alerting Sensory Input

## Movement:

- Stair climbing/sliding bumping down on bottom!
- Crawling through tunnels or boxes
- Tug of war
- Pushing/Pulling
- Kicking
- Carrying heavy items
- Body Stretch
- Heavy exercise – push ups, sits up
- Batting at balls
- Big ball activities
- Scooter board activities
- Wheelbarrow walking
- Pulling apart resistant toys/object -lego, snap beads)
- Pounding/rolling -playdoh
- Hitting punchbag
- Squishing between pillows
- Pushing against wall, another person.
- Silly animal walks

# Being a detective!

Observe carefully

- Try an idea and see if it works
- Combining everything you know sensory, emotional and behavioural supports.
- You are the expert on your child - sensory processing is just one more piece of the picture



# How can you help?

- By being aware of the problems
- By changing/adapting the environment to suit the child
- Decreasing distractions
- Using movement, sound, touch, vision and smell to help to calm or alert a child
- Preparing a child for change, movement, touch, sound etc.
- By building in sensory experiences in the child's day



Can  
.....learn?

Can .....

focus?

Does.....feel  
comfortable?

Does .....

feel  
safe?

# How can you help?

.....And don't forget to consider

- How tired or rested is your child?
- Do they feel safe and secure?
- Is the activity fun and achievable ?
- Do they feel confident and not worried about failing?
- Are you giving them attention at the times they do well not just when they demand it?
- Replace an unwanted behaviour with another that meets their needs but is preferable