

# Sensory Processing Disorder / Differences

## What is a Sensory Processing Disorder / Differences\* and where to find help and support?

When a child doesn't respond in the way they are expected to, it could be because they are finding something too intense or overwhelming and they just can't cope. Alternatively, it could be that they need even stronger sensory activity to get the message from their senses. There are 5 senses that you will probably know: Sight, Sound, Smell, Taste and Touch, but there are also 3 more - Vestibular (movement and balance) Proprioception (body awareness) and Interoception (how our body feels inside). Sensory processing disorder acts like a traffic jam between the brain and the nervous system so the message don't get to the brain properly. This can mean they respond from one extreme to the other - too much stimulation is overwhelming or they needs lots of stimulation to feel comfortable. Many children with sensory processing disorder/ differences can be easily helped once you, and they, know what their sensitivities are.

*\*Sensory Processing Disorder Cambridgeshire clinicians so not the term sensory disorder . This is because it is not included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (Fifth Edition) that guides their practice. "sensory differences are considered a symptom rather than a diagnosis. The Royal College of Occupational Therapy (RCOT) do not therefore support the use of SPD as a diagnostic label and, therefore, neither do Cambridgeshire's Occupational Health Team. – they use the term 'sensory processing difference's instead."*

## How do I know if my child has sensory processing issues?

Some children, for example, find a loud sound, like the sound of a lawn mower outside the window makes them really stressed. Some may scream when touched or hate the textures of certain fabrics or even vomit over some food textures. Some may equally seek out extra stimulation - making noises, stamping feet or being excessively touchy feelie. Others seem unresponsive to anything around them - they may fail to respond to extreme heat or cold, or even pain. Whatever the experience your child is having, it is very real to them and could express itself in anxiety, tears or challenging behaviour. It is always important to try to find out what is upsetting your child and remember that they are just reacting to the messages they are receiving. Many children show behaviours like this now and again but, when it is severe enough to make everyday life difficult, it is important to speak to someone, and to get help and advice.

## Who can help?

- You will know your child well and can probably already tell what triggers the problems, what helps and doesn't help - this is as valuable as a diagnose as this is the bit that makes the real difference to everyday life.
- Your child's teacher or SENCo are a good place to start - tell them what is worrying you. They may seek further help from an Occupational Therapist, who can make a diagnosis.
- You could speak to your GP, Health Visitor as they, too, can organise an assessment

## Where to find out more on website:

[hwww.pinpoint-camb.org.uk](http://www.pinpoint-camb.org.uk) and look under Useful Information