

Sensory Modulation Disorder

Sensory Modulation Disorder is one specific type of Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD). Sensory modulation refers specifically to the brain's ability to respond appropriately to the sensory environment and to remain at the appropriate level of arousal or alertness. There are three primary types of Sensory Modulation Disorder.

Over-Responsivity:

An exaggerated response of the nervous system to sensory input. For example, people who get motion sick easily are over-responding to vestibular input (the sensation of movement). The nervous system goes into fight-or-flight mode even when no real danger exists.

Under-Responsivity:

A lack of response, or insufficient response to the sensory environment. Sometimes these people appear to be daydreaming or unfocused on what is happening around them. They may also be uncoordinated and have difficulty with motor skills development.

Sensory-seeking:

The nervous system of the sensory-seeker needs intense input in order for the sensation to be registered properly in the brain. Therefore the sensory-seeker craves intense sensations constantly.

Symptoms of Over-Responsivity include:

- as babies: extremely fussy, startles easily, may seem to dislike light touch, difficult to transition to baby food and away from bottle, delayed motor skill development,
- picky eating habits,
- clothing issues – doesn't like tags, seams, certain fabric,
- self-care issues – dislikes hair care, nail trimming, face washing, bathing,
- low frustration tolerance, moody irritable, fussy,
- frequent melt-downs that are out of proportion to the situation,
- easily overwhelmed in noisy, busy environments like birthday parties, school lunch room, restaurants,
- dislikes light touch and may be resistive to messy play like finger painting or play dough,
- as adults: irritable, moody, bothered by noises that other people can tune out, picky about foods and clothing, may still dislike touch, bothered by lighting (especially fluorescent), stays away from busy environments, may prefer to be alone.



Symptoms of Under-Responsivity include:

- as babies: slow to respond to sounds and sights, may be exceptionally easy, delayed motor skill development, may have difficulty transitioning to baby food and may seem not to notice being messy or drooling,
- food cravings – particularly salty, spicy foods,
- may stuff too much food in mouth,
- may not notice messy face, hands, twisted clothing,
- often appears to be day dreaming or unfocused on what is going on,
- asks 'what' a lot even when hearing is fine,
- may be overweight,
- high pain tolerance or may not seem to notice cuts and bruises,
- low muscle tone, may slump, slouch and lean in chair or desk,
- toe-walking or awkward gait,
- clumsiness,
- poor fine motor skill development.



Symptoms of Sensory-seeking include:

- as babies: love movement, love 'rough-housing', happiest in busy, stimulating environments
- crave salty, spicy foods or extra chewy and crunchy foods,
- always in constant motion, may 'crash' into walls or floor on purpose,
- may toe-walk, or may run/jump/skip everywhere rather than walk,
- difficulty staying still in seat,
- touches everything, may bring everything to mouth,
- plays rough,
- poor attention span.

If you feel like you or your child may have some of these symptoms which are interfering with your / their quality of life, our occupational therapists can help you. They will identify and give you strategies to manage yours or your child's sensory issues. You don't have to struggle alone, just call us at Therapy Professionals Ltd

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