

# **Spread the Word, Senses Matter: An Educational Tool for Sensory Processing Disorder**



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## Sensory Processing Disorder Quiz

### Vestibular (movement) Seeker:

"Pablo goes nonstop!" says Ms. Beverly, his teacher. He is constantly moving- from the time he walks in the door, he is always on the go. He will not sit still during circle time, and Ms. Beverly has tried everything. Even when he is sitting still he is still moving. He rocks back and forth and constantly fidgets with his pockets, buttons or the ties on his clothes. Pablo is a risk taker and gets hurt all the time. She has tried to help Pablo pay attention in class and be more focused in the classroom. She states she has tried to remind him to keep his feet on the ground when seated. But, it just does not seem to sink in.

- What are the red flags?
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- What should you try in therapy?

- A. Use movement breaks
- B. Keep with same activity until Pablo can sit still
- C. Use verbal cueing to keep him seated
- D. Put child in your lap and make him be still

### Auditory Seekers:

Kaitlynn is a six-year-old in kindergarten at her local elementary school. Kaitlynn's teacher suspects she may be autistic. Kaitlynn does not actively participate at circle time; she does not make eye contact with her teacher; she typically sits in the circle, rocking back and forth humming loudly to herself; she is echolalic and uses limited verbal language; and she often escapes to the bathroom, where she closes the door and flushes the toilet repeatedly. Her favorite center is the Music Center, where she puts on headphones and listens to music with CD player set on its loudest volume.

- What are the red flags?
- 

- What should you try in clinic?

- A. Give Kaitlynn ear-plugs
- B. Never let her use headphones with iPad
- C. Use noises or music as reward
- D. Avoid using music in therapy

### Auditory Avoiders:

Ethan is a three-year-old child who has just started at a full-day child care center. Ethan's teacher has observed that he gets very upset each time the train passes by the window and blows its whistle, which happens a few times a day. Most of the children either race to the window to watch the train, or they completely ignore it. Ethan runs to a corner, cowers down, covers his ears, and closes his eyes as if afraid or in pain. Ethan's teacher reported this behavior to his mother, who said "Yes, he is very sensitive to loud noises. He hides in the closet every time I vacuum at home. So, I just don't vacuum when he is home."

- What are the red flags?
- 

- What would you do in clinic?

- A. Use earplugs, headphones or earmuffs
- B. Play many different loud noises to get him used to it
- C. Use background music during session
- D. Use many verbal commands during session

**Proprioception (body awareness/deep pressure) Seekers:**

Parker is an energetic five-year old boy who entertains himself by running and crashing into walls, bookcases, and the water fountain. After he falls down, Parker jumps up from the floor and laughs wildly at himself. Most people are afraid of Parker because he is so rough. He sometimes pushes and hits them, especially at the end of the day when everyone is tired. Parker likes to be at the end of the line and slam the doors shut as he walks through them.

- What are the red flags?
- 

- What would you do in therapy?

- A. Use heavy work ex: crash pad, climbing wall
- B. Separate Parker from all children
- C. Do not give movement breaks until end of session
- D. Use only light touch or not touch at all

**Tactile Avoiders (tactile defensiveness):**

Adriana is a very picky eater with a limited diet consisting of soft foods. Her mother packs lunch for Adriana, but she usually just sits and stares while the other children eat. At rest time, Adriana tosses and turns on her mat, readjusts her blanket over and over again, and usually falls asleep during the last 15-20 minutes of rest time. Adriana never chooses the Art Center and refuses to participate in messy activities. When the pre-K class planted tomato plants in their outside pots, Adriana clung to the teacher and said, "Yuck! I don't want to do it." When another child accidentally bumped into Adriana, while carrying a pitcher of water, and spilled some on her leg, Adriana cried and screamed at the top of her lungs, "Aah! He spilled water on me!"

- What are the red flags?
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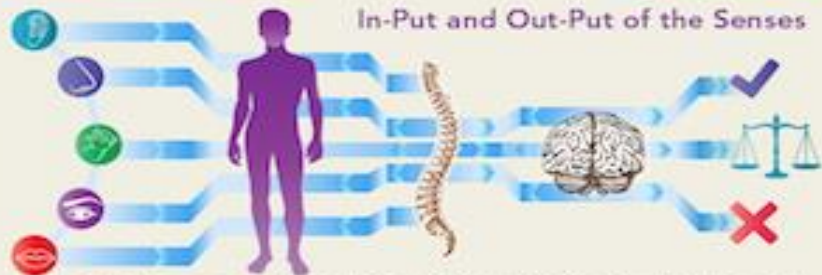
- What would you do in clinic?

- A. Force the child to touch new textures/foods
- B. Use the look, touch, kiss, eat progression
- C. Surprise child with new food or textures
- D. Talk loudly and a lot during session



## What Is SPD

Sensory Integration or Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) is when there is a dysfunction in the way the nervous system receives messages from the senses and turns them into responses. Whether you are eating chicken nuggets, sitting in class listening to the teacher or coloring with a crayon, your successful completion of the activity requires processing sensation or sensory feedback.



1. Outside world (environment) enters inside world (body/CNS) through the sensory receptors
2. The peripheral nerves take the info to the spinal cord
3. The info goes then to the brain via nerve tracts
4. Over-arousal: superfluous sensory info passes through the brain "blow" causing excitement, confusion, and distractibility
5. Under-arousal: insufficient sensory info gets processed in the brain, causing absence of mind, delay, and accidents



Hypo-reactive nervous system is one where the child has decreased arousal and it takes longer for the child to "feel" the sensation.

### Hypo-reactive nervous system

- Under-reactive to touch and may prefer heavy touch to light touch
- Under-reactive to sounds such as a mom or teacher calling his name
- Under-arousal resulting in looking long, open mouthed posture, may look mostly like a teddy bear; may often appear bored
- Spends mostly due to modulation issues with lack of proper sensory feedback system
- May appear clumsy or disorganized as body awareness may be lower



Hyper-reactive nervous system is one where the child has increased arousal and it is difficult for the child to tune out sensory input and provide proper output.

### Hyper-reactive nervous system

- Overly sensitive to touch
- Gets too close to people
- Hyper-reactive to smells
- Loud sounds that others tune out seems early distractible
- Able to tolerate vestibular input like spinning and running around for long periods of time
- Hyper-sensitive to other people's touch and clothes which may feel very uncomfortable



## Signs of SPD

- Difficulty staying in line
- Laying on the floor during circle time
- Hugging too tightly
- Sensitive to touch
- Attention to foods with certain textures
- Won't wear certain clothes that feel hard or too long or too tight
- Doesn't like tags on clothing
- Clumsy
- Has a meltdown at parties or lunchroom
- Scared of other's laughter at the playground
- Walks on toes
- Distractible
- Not reacting to someone calling him because he may have not have processed it
- Talking loudly

## Solutions For SPD

### Home

- ✓ Set routines
- ✓ Break tasks down
- ✓ Speak to your child when you know you have his attention and he can process it
- ✓ Use visuals such as calendars and lists for bedtime routines
- ✓ Use a timer for commands he must meet
- ✓ Be consistent
- ✓ Apply appropriate consequences

### School

- ✓ Supply a fidget bin to keep the child busy if he needs to be moving or around
- ✓ Use visual schedules
- ✓ Make sure the child is listening and processing before you expect a response
- ✓ Have the child move before requiring the completion of a task
- ✓ Allow child to preview work the night before at home

### Pediatric Therapy

- ✓ Join social groups
- ✓ Set goals
- ✓ Learn to function
- ✓ Use sensory strategies to help arouse or calm the nervous system
- ✓ Increase strength so that tone is efficient in order for child to have better body awareness and thus increased attention
- ✓ Support and advocate for parents at home and school



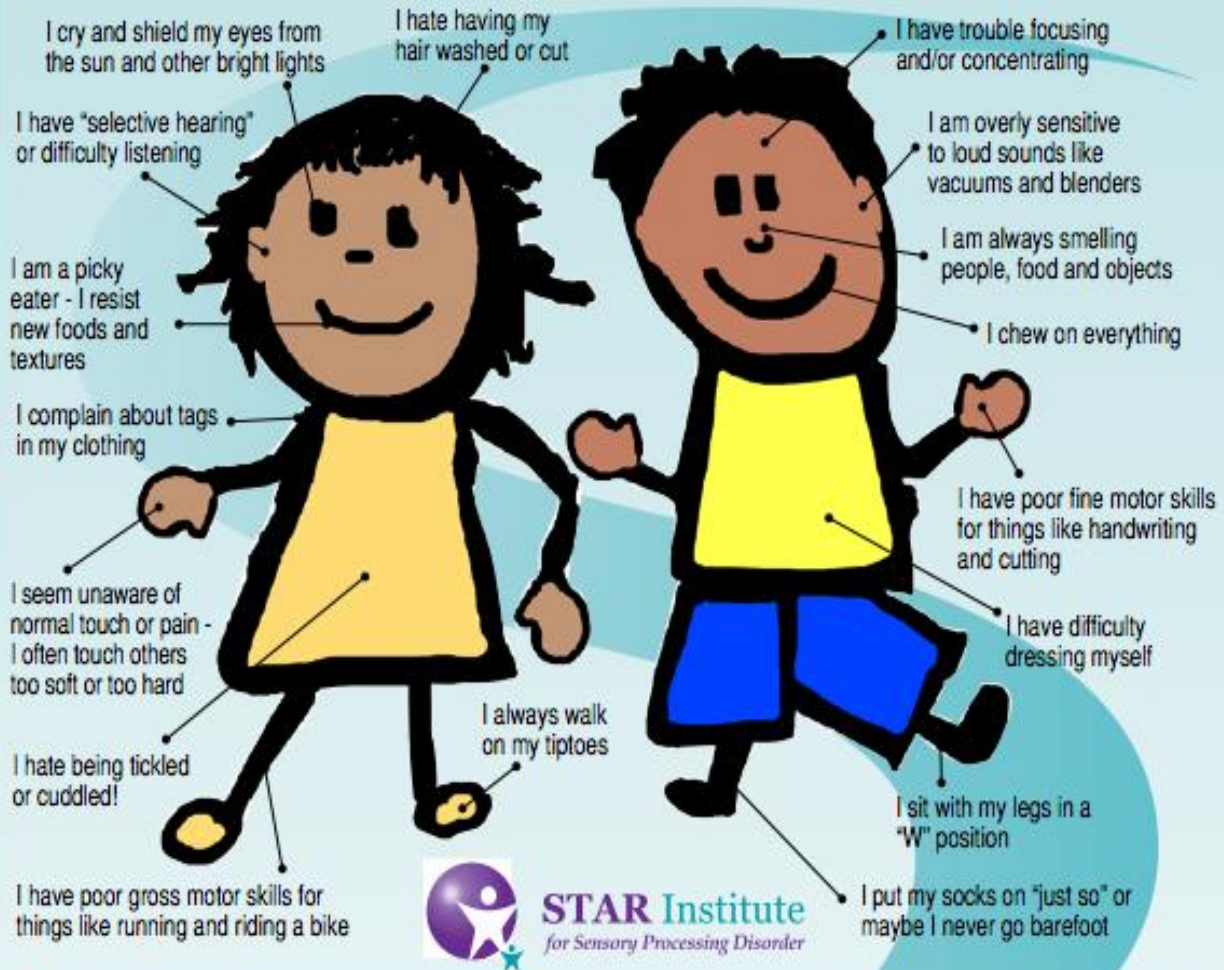
For more on SPD including videos, checklists, webinars and answers to your questions visit:

[www.SPDIInfographic.com](http://www.SPDIInfographic.com)

Provided by North Shore Pediatric Therapy [www.NSPTherapy.com](http://www.NSPTherapy.com) (877) 486-4140



# Do You Know Me?



## If I have several of these characteristics I may have Sensory Processing Disorder

I have Sensory Processing Disorder – SPD, for short. That means my brain can't process sensations the way other people's brains do. When my brain gets information through any of my senses – sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch, movement – it doesn't always know what to do with the information. I can become very disorganized and confused! Sometimes I over-react to all this sensory input or maybe I don't react enough. Depending on what senses are involved, I may have trouble with jobs that come naturally to other kids, even feeding myself or putting on clothes. This makes it really hard for me to function at school, in public, and even at home. I might have trouble learning or making friends, and I may have a lot of tantrums and meltdowns. I can be really shy and withdrawn from everyone, even my own mom and dad!

Because I never know what's going to set off my sensory alarms, I'm often afraid of activities all the other kids enjoy. It's tough being sensational.

So do you know me? Or someone like me? Scientists say as many as 1 in 20 kids has symptoms like mine. You can do lots of things to make stuff easier. Please, be patient and understanding with kids like me. If you're my teacher or my doctor or anyone in my life, learn all you can about Sensory Processing Disorder. STAR Institute makes that super easy by running the biggest SPD website in the whole wide world and by putting on all sorts of cool educational events. If you're my parent, please remember there is hope and help for me in occupational therapy with a sensory integration approach.

For more information visit [www.spdstar.org](http://www.spdstar.org)

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