

Supporting Sensory Needs

Children and young people may be hyper-sensitive (seeking to avoid the sense) or hypo-sensitive (seeking out more of the sense) to any of the senses listed below:

- ✓ Auditory
- ✓ Visual
- ✓ Oral
- ✓ Smell
- ✓ Tactile
- ✓ Vestibular (the sense of movement and balance)
- ✓ Proprioceptive (the sense of 'position' of your body in space and the input from muscles and joints to the brain)
- ✓ Interoception (internal senses from your body; hunger, thirst, pain & needing to use toilet)



It's possible to be both hyper and hypo sensitive to the same sense (for instance, someone may enjoy their own noise, e.g. their voice or choice of music but find others' or background noises intolerable. It's important to remember that sensory perception and sensitivity can also vary depending on levels of anxiety, illness and the environment a child is in.

Some children may benefit from further assessment and an individualised 'sensory diet'. There are a few suggestions to try below:

- ✓ Wearing tinted or sunglasses for those who are over-sensitive to light.
- ✓ Taking packed lunches with preferred food/drinks for those who are avoidant of certain foods/textures.
- ✓ Chewy toys for those who seek oral sensory input.
- ✓ Headphones playing a favourite music or audio book for those who become easily overstimulated by noise and crowded places.
- ✓ Carrying an object with a favoured familiar scent, e.g. toy, small blanket, or spraying a sleeve or handkerchief for those who become distressed by unfamiliar or unpleasant smells.
- ✓ Seamless socks, wide fitting shoes and cutting labels out of clothes for those who are hyper-sensitive to touch.
- ✓ Asking before touching/hugging your child as some children are sensitive to touch – or equally some children may like the comfort of deep pressure and may feel well-regulated using weighted blankets or similar.



- ✓ Access to messy play or a fidget toy for those who seek tactile input.
- ✓ Plenty of opportunity for movement e.g. scooter, trampoline, running and bike rides for those who seek plenty of movement.
- ✓ Rough and tumble play, playing in ball pits and sensory toys (such as a body sock) can be helpful for those with proprioception needs.

Create a personalised transportable 'Calm Down' kit;

