

Sensory Checklist

Name _____ Date _____ Class/Year _____

Tick any characteristics which may apply to your child/young person to plan an intervention and highlight strategies. This checklist is not diagnostic in any way but will give an indication of sensory sensitivities.

HEARING

Children/young people (CYP) with auditory sensitivities may:

- Seem unaware of the source of sounds: may look around to locate where sounds come from.
- Have trouble identifying voices or discriminating between sounds.
- Be distressed by noises that are loud, sudden, metallic, or high pitched, or by sounds that don't bother others.
- Have trouble attending to, understanding, or remembering what they read or hear. They may misinterpret requests, frequently ask for repetition and be able to follow only one or two instructions in sequence.
- Look at others before responding.
- Have trouble putting thoughts into spoken or written words.
- Talk 'off topic', e.g. talk about their new shirt when others are discussing something else.
- Have trouble 'closing circles of communication', e.g., responding to others' questions and comments.
- Have trouble correcting or revising what they have said in order to be understood.
- Have a reduced vocabulary and use immature sentence structure (poor grammar and syntax).
- Have difficulty reading aloud.
- Have trouble making up rhymes and singing in tune.
- Have difficulty speaking and articulating clearly.
- Improve their speaking ability after they experience intense movement.

VISION

CYP with visual sensitivities may:

- Shield their eyes to screen out sights, close or cover one eye, or squint.
- Complain of seeing double.
- Have difficulty shifting their gaze from one object to another, such as when looking from the whiteboard/smartboard to their own paper.
- Turn or tilt head as they read across the page.
- Turn or tilt body as they watch television or the teacher at circle time.
- Have difficulty tracking or following a moving object, such as a table tennis ball, or following a line of printed words.
- Fail to comprehend what they are reading or quickly lose interest.
- Confuse likenesses and differences in pictures, words, symbols, and objects.
- Omit words or numbers and lose the place while reading and writing.
- Have difficulty with schoolwork involving the size constancy of letters, the spacing of letters and words, and the lining up of numbers.
- Have difficulty with fine motor tasks involving spatial relationships, such as fitting pieces into jigsaw puzzles and cutting along lines.
- Orient drawings poorly on the page or write uphill or downhill.
- Misjudge spatial relationships of objects in the environment, often bumping into furniture or misstepping on stairs and kerbs.
- Confuse right and left, have a poor sense of direction, and often head the wrong way.
- Not understand concepts such as up/down, before/after and first/second.
- Fail to visualise what they read. It may be hard to call up mental images of objects and people, not relating pictures and words to 'the real thing'.
- Be uncomfortable or overwhelmed by moving objects or people.
- Fatigue easily during schoolwork.



TOUCH

CYP **oversensitive** (hyper) to touch stimuli may:

- Have tactile defensiveness (oversensitivity to unexpected, light touch), rubbing off casual touches and pushing others away to avoid closeness.
- Instantly and intensely exhibit a 'fight or fright' response or a 'flight or freeze' response to harmless touch sensations.
- Dislike messy activities.
- Be bothered by certain types of clothing.
- Prefer to wear long sleeves even in summer or dress lightly even in winter.
- Become anxious and aggressive on windy days.
- Be a picky eater- texture and temperature.
- Dislike swimming.
- Have poor peer relationships.

CYP who are **under responsive** (hypo) to touch sensations may:

- Touch people and objects constantly.
- Seem unaware of touch unless it is intense, showing little reaction to pain.
- Not realise they have dropped something.
- Have poor body awareness.
- Not notice how their clothes feel and whether they are on straight.
- Be insensitive to room temperature.
- Be a sloppy eater and unaware of messiness on their face.
- Chew on inedible objects.
- Physically hurt other people, not comprehending the pain that others feel.
- Inappropriately 'invade' others space.

CYP who find tactile **discrimination** harder may:

- Seem out of touch with their hands as if they are unfamiliar appendages.
- Have trouble holding and using tools (pencils, scissors, forks)
- Avoid initiating tactile experiences e.g. picking up items that appeal to others.
- Have trouble perceiving objects' physical properties (texture, shape, size, density).
- Without the aid of visual cues:
 - Be unable to identify what body parts have been touched.
 - Be unable to identify familiar objects solely through touch.
 - Find it harder to perform tasks such as zipping, buttoning, tying shoes.
 - Prefer standing to sitting to ensure visual control of his surroundings.
 - Squirm or sit on edge of chair.

SMELL & TASTE

CYP with olfactory differences may:

- Be sensitive to smells and object to odours, e.g., ripe bananas, that other children do not notice.
- Be under sensitive to smells and ignore or not notice unpleasant odours such as body odour.
- Be a picky eater.
- Be a compulsive hair sniffer.

CYP with gustatory differences may:

- Be oversensitive to tastes and may strongly object to certain textures / temperatures of foods.
- May gag often when they eat.
- May lick or taste inedible objects such as play dough and toys.
- May prefer very spicy or very hot foods.



MOVEMENT

CYP who are **under responsive** (hypo) to movement and/or actively seeking movement stimuli may:

- Appear fidgety or unable to sit still, pursuing movement to the point it interferes with daily routines.
- Play or fiddle with objects. These might be everyday items, such as pens and notebooks.
- Seek movement through rocking motions, whilst standing or sitting. This might look like pacing.
- Become excited during movement tasks.
- Take movement risks that are unsafe, such as climbing.
- Look for opportunities to fall with no regard for their safety, e.g., falling to the floor on purpose.
- Find endless reasons to approach staff, i.e., to get out of their chair and move across the classroom.

VESTIBULAR

CYP who are sensitive to balance and **oversensitive** (hyper) to movement stimuli may:

- Withdraw from classroom participation and avoid group activities in which movement is required. They may be seen to stand or sit at the side of the playground during break times.
- Be intolerant to movement and therefore avoid it.
- Overreact, negatively and emotionally, to ordinary movement sensations.
- Dislike physical activities such as running.
- Be cautious, slow-moving, and sedentary, hesitating to take risks.
- Not like their head to be inverted.
- Be very tense and rigid to avoid changes in head position.
- Be uncomfortable on stairs, clinging to walls or banisters.
- Feel seasick when riding in a car or bus.
- Appear to be stubborn, controlling, uncooperative.
- Demand continued physical support from a trusted peer or adult.
- Have the additional problem of gravitational insecurity, a great fear of falling experienced as high anxiety.

PROPRIOCEPTION

CYP with underdeveloped integration of sensations coming from muscles and joints may:

- Have problems with touch or with balance and movement as well.
- Have a poor sense of body awareness.
- Be stiff, uncoordinated, falling and tripping frequently.
- Lean, bump, or crash against objects and people and invade others' body space.
- Have difficulty carrying out unfamiliar and complex motions.
- Be unable to do ordinary, familiar things without looking, such as getting dressed.
- Manipulate classroom tools so hard that they break.
- Pull and twist clothing, stretch t-shirts, chew sleeves and collars.
- Have difficulty ascending and descending stairs.
- Slap feet or stomp when walking, sit on their feet, stretch their limbs, poke their cheeks, pull on their fingers and crack knuckles.
- Drape themselves over furniture or on other people.
- Fail to steady objects when working, e.g., they may not hold down the paper when writing).



INTEROCEPTION

CYP who are still developing their interoception, the sense that connects us to our internal body sensations, may:

- Have difficulty with toileting, such as bed wetting/accidents. Not recognising if their bladder is full or using the bathroom more frequently than needed.
- Be unable to recognise if they're dehydrated or hungry. Or alternatively may always feel thirsty or hungry.
- Have difficulty noticing and communicating their internal body states, such as if they feel hot/cold, or have hurt themselves.
- Struggle to regulate their emotions and feelings.
- Get distracted by internal sensory input, e.g., hearing their heartbeat. This may present like they struggle with focus and attention.
- Be overly noisy and unable to tell how loud their voice is or using sound to cover unwanted sensory stimuli.
- Seem unaware of pain or have extremely high pain tolerance, e.g., unable to explain where bruises, or similar, came from. Alternatively, they may have intense reactions to pain.
- Frequently feels nauseous.
- Have trouble "feeling" their emotions (e.g., don't notice their muscles are tense and heart is racing when they are scared).
- Feel emotions more intensely/ are overwhelmed by their emotions.

Notice any patterns? Delete/circle as appropriate.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing (auditory) | <i>Over/under reaction/ sensation seeking/avoiding?</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seeing (visual) | <i>Over/under reaction/ sensation seeking/avoiding?</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Touch (tactile) | <i>Over/under reaction/ sensation seeking/avoiding?</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Smell (olfactory) | <i>Over/under reaction/ sensation seeking/avoiding?</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taste (gustatory) | <i>Over/under reaction/ sensation seeking/avoiding?</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Movement | <i>Over/under reaction/ sensation seeking/avoiding?</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vestibular | <i>Over/under reaction/ sensation seeking/avoiding?</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Proprioceptive | <i>Over/under reaction/ sensation seeking/avoiding?</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interoceptive | <i>Over/under reaction/ sensation seeking/avoiding?</i> |

