

# MARC'S SENSORY OASIS

*Sensory-based Occupational Therapy*

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Sensory Sensitive People are at Risk for all kinds of Overload, and for being blamed for the behaviour that results from the toxic sensory load put on them by society

YOU CAN BELIEVE ME ON THIS ONE !

CHILDREN ARE PRECIOUS!

*We do not all have the same tolerance for sensory overload*

## PEOPLE WHO ARE SENSORY SENSITIVE MISUNDERSTOOD

There are many children who are very sensitive to a variety of input around them. Not all sensory sensitive people are sensitive to all forms of input. Some people are extremely sensitive to sound and noise input, but not to other input such as touch or visual input. Others are very sensitive to touch or bright lights, while others are sensitive to activity and 'busy' environments. Many people who are sensory sensitive are not even aware of their differences, but just observe that certain environments bother them or that they become upset and agitated in certain environments. Some people do not seem as sensitive when they are in control or can anticipate something coming. When suddenly touched or surrounded by noise, however, a startle can be triggered which is not conscious and results in an automatic defensive response. For example, when a sensory sensitive child is bumped in a line, it is the same as if someone suddenly touched you while you were walking in a dark parking lot late at night - not a thought out response based on rules or expectations but a desperate attempt to protect oneself from attack.

Sensory sensitive people can be very particular about their environment, and rely heavily on routine and ritual to keep the environment predictable.

Sensory overload is one of the biggest threats facing community and relationship, and we are often unaware that it is even happening.

If I always sit in the same place, the visual and auditory environments are likely to be more predictable. So for a sensory sensitive person, keeping things orderly and predictable may really help the person to feel calm and comfortable. If something is out of place, a sensory sensitive person will notice it and may need to fix it before moving on. A sensory sensitive person will do a task the same way each time, once taught. People who are sensory sensitive notice details that others would miss, so they are great to have around! People who are sensory sensitive tend to like things a little more mellow and a little more bland. Strong tastes and lots of activity can be upsetting. People with this profile tend to be different at home, where life is more quiet and predictable and they feel more in control. But at school or work, especially with lots of unpredictable children around, someone who needs calm predictability can be easily aroused and agitated. Using clear visual schedules and lists helps people to feel organized and helps make the environment more predictable, and these make it easier for the sensory sensitive person to function.

There are a lot of things sensory sensitive people can do to protect themselves from excessive input, and we should be able to support them with this. Some people find that wearing long or snug clothing helps the skin to not process light touch and temperature. Some people find that background noise helps them to not be bothered by other noises in the environment. Facing away from a window or sitting at a study carrel help to reduce excess visual input, as does wearing sunglasses or a visor/cap. Sensory input that has a calming influence on the nervous system often helps to lower levels of arousal, and may help sensory sensitive people. For example, wearing a weighted vest or weighted product often has a calming effect, and this is often clearly seen with the sensory sensitive child. Wearing the vest grounds and anchors the child, who begins to feel more safe and relaxed compared to always feeling on guard or unsafe. Using sensory calming options throughout the day can greatly increase the ability of a sensory sensitive person to function well.

Whatever one is sensitive to, one becomes even more sensitive to when stressed or agitated. Something which may not register as noxious when we are calm may grate on our nerves when we are already on edge. If one is stressed and under pressure, smells, sights, sounds, may all seem more intense and harder to ignore. What bothers a sensory sensitive person one day may not be a problem another day, for many reasons. Variability in sensitivities is hallmark when people are in environments that they cannot control. This variability often leads to people being characterized as 'spoiled' or 'complainers'. It may be hard to understand how something that did not bother a person yesterday can bother him/her today until you can relate this to changing sensitivities in your own life. The bottom line is that we need to trust people and help them to learn what bothers them and keeps them from doing their work and then to help find solutions to these challenges.

Once overly aroused or agitated, sensory reduction may be necessary to

ADULTS WERE INVENTED TO KEEP  
KIDS SAFE!

Safe House!

Plastics do not belong in our mouths or on our foods and the sooner we learn it, the better. We missed the boat on most toxins associated with plastics by only banning them from products once it is strongly proven that they cause damage, which research is not funded by scientists who create plastics. Now, BPA, teflon, and a host of other man made products are found in everyone's blood, with over 80 chemicals found in cord blood of north american umbilical cords. Come on, folks.

Bisphenyl-F, BPF, more toxic than the bisphenyl-A removed from children's bottles and cups? How can you keep up with safety and research? It's not easy...unless you stop thinking about analyzing, stop trusting big business, look at the big picture, and start using common sense!

Minimize plastics in and around your children. Do not cook, eat, drink with plastic. Only good quality stainless steel, glass, and domestic ceramic should be used in and around food, especially warm or hot food. And beware with ceramic, because the cheapest and brightest glazes have lead, cadmium, or other toxic heavy metals, especially in low quality or unregulated factories.

Plastics made to remain soft generally have more dangerous petrochemicals or synthetic petrochemicals.

In Europe, products made with chemicals (including petrochemicals) must have substantial research proving safety before they are allowed on the market. They believe that human health is more important than safety, maybe because politicians cannot accept money from big corporations.

Compare autism rates in toxic first world countries with more natural and chemical free societies. Valuing our children means we must decrease their toxic exposures every day.

help a sensory sensitive person feel calm and in control again. When one has become frazzled or agitated, finding a calm sensory retreat can be very important in helping a person learn to shift gears. For many people, changing environments and moving may be perfect, others may need more intense sensory reduction. Just taking a walk and delivering or picking up something may help to reduce the overwhelming sensory input. Once agitated, however, the sensory reduction may need to be more intense. Having a dimly lit area with calm music, cushions, pillows, can be very calming, especially with preferred activities such as books, cars, etc. Touch input can also be very calming and can be combined with sensory reduction to help a person regain a feeling of being calm and in control. Focusing on a motor task can help the person to stop thinking about the sources of stress and begin to feel calm again. Again, things like timers and visual schedules help to build in predictability, which is calming.

Some examples of environmental challenges that may be too much for a sensory sensitive child:

assemblies in large indoor spaces  
indoor recess  
fire drills  
doing still work in busy places  
flickering lights or monitors  
sun shining onto someone's face/desk  
loud and sudden bells and alarms  
sitting near a window with a busy view  
hearing water/flushing in a washroom

cafeterias full of people  
outdoor crowds  
in class free time/stations  
sitting next to a noise source  
visual clutter  
cold plastic seats  
hearing singing out of key  
sudden start of hand drier

Sensory calming may help a sensitive child to manage a challenging environment, or to recover from overload. Examples of sensory calming strategies include:

sensory reduction (see above)  
slow rocking, swinging, bouncing, walking  
social stories  
deep pressure  
calm, relaxing music  
fish tanks, calming visual motion  
progressive muscle relaxation

weighted products  
headphones/white noise  
deep tactile input  
dim incandescent lights  
fidget items to keep hands busy  
breathing exercises

People who are sensory sensitive learn to notice all kinds of details in the environment. They can learn to be very exacting in their work, and they often do great with details. These people make great witnesses as they notice so much. Sensory sensitive people often thrive on routine and structure, and do well in environments where this is encouraged and respected.

In working with a sensory sensitive person, Considering the child's complete sensory profile is very helpful, as is consultation with an occupational therapist who has experience with sensory processing.

And while we're at it, should we ban plastic bags? Some people think so. Did you realize that the "plastic bags" that are used in "Choices" grocery stores are not made with 'plastic', a petrochemical? They are made with corn starch, and are completely biodegradable. They should not be called "plastic" at all, maybe "plantic" would be a better word. I'm old. But when I was young, there was more cellophane made than plastic. Cellophane, made from cell walls of plants (cellulose) was gradually phased out as more expensive petrochemicals were invented (i.e. Dow, Monsanto). And you wonder why we are sicker and dumber each generation? It's the toxins, friend. And if you try, as did my son and wife, to eliminate chemicals from kids bodies, what you see it truly miraculous! Good health, advances in development, improved brain function, and happiness!!

Sensory Sensitive People should avoid:

Artificial Colours  
Artificial Preservatives  
Strong smells  
fluorescent and CFL  
toxic soaps and detergents  
fluoride  
GMO's  
working for large and hostile companies (like Vancouver Coastal Health)  
ALL artificial sweeteners  
ALL high fructose corn syrup  
ALL non-organic food  
Antibiotics  
non homeopathic vaccines  
excessive electromagnetic fields  
toxic glues in the home  
new carpet smells (plastics)  
over the counter drugs  
pharmaceuticals  
toxic detergents and cleaners