

MARC'S SENSORY OASIS

Sensory-based Occupational Therapy

www.marclandry.ca



Barbara Laird Receives Well Deserved Award!!
Parent/Educator/Advocate Receives
Queen Elizabeth Silver Jubilee Medal

LOCAL HERO WORKS TIRELESSLY

www.beyondtheboxbasics.com is Barbara's website

Support My Work
recommend someone to sponsor
or attend my workshop

PRECIOUS!

CHILDREN ARE

ACCEPTANCE AND UNDERSTANDING IS WHAT WE NEED

The Foundation necessary to support people with sensory differences.

I have worked with heroic leaders like Barbara Laird and many of you out there to improve our ability to support children with a higher than average "SENSORY SEEKING" side to their temperament. Many are tempted to blame parents, or children themselves, for this innate sensory difference that can interfere with learning and function. It's just a part of our ever increasing neurologic diversity.

There are many children for whom sensory seeking is a major component of who they are; it is an important part of the child's sensory

temperament. (Many children with low registration become sensory seekers to bring their level of arousal higher, and 'low registration' information should be reviewed if appropriate for your child.) Sensory seekers look for sensory input in all aspects of life. Thoughts and actions will be interrupted by the sensory world around them which seems to call out to them to touch, look, listen, feel, move, and explore. Children with sensory seeking tendencies tend to have high neurological thresholds, and they become sensory seekers in an effort to reach these thresholds.

Supporting Sensory Seekers means becoming their ALLIES. Help them get their needs met and then they can get their work done.

People who seek sensory input are happiest in an environment with a lot of input. Areas with lots of bright colours, things to touch, sounds, opportunities to move, etc. help to keep a child alert. Aspects of the environment we want the child to attend to should be as salient as possible, so they stand out from the (bland) background. People who are sensory seekers can always see sensory opportunities around them. They tend to be creative and original, although we may not appreciate this. What looks to me and you like a sofa might look like a high beam to a sensory seeker. What we see as a high dresser might be a high launch pad for a big jump. Sensory seekers are not looking to cause trouble, they simply see the world differently than we do. The goal of a sensory seeker is to find ways to increase intensity and duration of sensory input to keep level of arousal high.

If we can discover what types of input the child seeks, those types of input can be built into the child's activity schedule. For example, if a child likes to move/fidget a lot, sitting on a chair ball or movin'sit cushion might be helpful. Having things to fidget with is helpful when the child is required to be still. Keeping the child's materials on the other side of the room allows movement opportunities during and in between tasks. In between tasks, the child might go down the hall for a drink or up some stairs and back again. More intense movement breaks would be scheduled every hour or so. A child who seeks visual input can have short frequent breaks to spin a top, look through a kaleidoscope, gaze at a fish tank or screen saver, and then get back to work.

Adding gravity and heavy work increases and changes the input the nervous system receives. Gravity (adding weight) and heavy work (pushing, pulling, etc.) helps to calm the nervous system so satiation to the sensory seeking may occur.

A common misconception is that we can motivate children to do what we want them to do by reinforcing that with something they desire to meet an innate sensory need. This is like asking a hungry child to complete a challenging task before they can have food; it is counterproductive, disrespectful, and in some forms this constitutes abuse. Just because a child has different sensory needs (i.e. cannot sit as long) does not mean the child's learning should be sacrificed because their needs are different than those of many of their 'typical' peers.

Sensory seeking opportunities can include all sensory areas, and may end with a calming form of input:

Tactile: touching objects, fidget items, wash hands, wash desk with shaving cream, wear jewelry. Ending with touch that is deep, hard, smooth tends to be more calming.

Visual: spinning tops, mobiles, watching fast movement or sports, make target materials bright against a dull background, let child climb high and watch activity. Input that is more subdued and more consistent tends to be calming.

Proprioceptive: jump, push things, bounce, wall pushes, crab walk, chair push-ups, squeeze hands, provide touch pressure, carry things. Input that involves pushing, pulling, lifting, dragging, hanging from arms, etc. tends to be calming.

ADULTS WERE INVENTED TO KEEP
KIDS SAFE WHILE STILL
ALLOWING FUN!

Safe House!

How can you allow your child to get the sensory input he or she needs and still be safe?

All children are sensory seekers to one degree or another, this is an innate mechanism that fosters development, and mellows out by the time one is old enough to become a parent!

Allow your child to seek and get the level of intensity s/he needs and still be safe. Most kids do not go beyond their limits, but some have difficulty unwinding and calming at the end. If you end with calming input, your child will be better able to function and re-join our world. Of course, there are times when sensory seeking should be allowed to go on longer, allowing children to end on their own.

Examples of sensory activities to end sensory sessions with in order to promote calming:

- deep pressure massage, back rub using comfort touch
- joint compressions
- stretches
- snuggling in a sleeping bag, bean bag chair, large pillows
- blanket wrap (neutral warmth) or swaddling for a younger child
- firm pressure and skin to skin contact (squeezes to head, trunk, shoulders, hands)
- slow rocking or swaying - rocking chair, in adults lap or arms, on tummy in a head to heel direction (rhythmic motion)
- child uses palms to press together or against temples
- seeking out quiet area
- slow swinging- back and forth - in a blanket or rocking chair, swing
- lycra/spandex clothing, neoprene vest, weighted vest or blanket
- lavender, vanilla, banana or other soothing smells
- sucking or heavy chewing
- hideout, fort or quiet corner
- progressive muscle relaxation
- white noise or quiet music with a steady beat
- bear hugs (child faces away from you)
- hugging a teddy bear, giving self hugs,
- warm or tepid bath

Vestibular: add movement with pacing, rocking, or spinning; provide movement in linear, lateral or orbital planes, rocking chair, beach ball seat, swings, stairs, walk across room. Input that is smooth and rhythmical tends to be calming.

Auditory: sing, hum, repeat directions, (wait up to 20 seconds between a comment or request to allow time for processing), expand the vowel in a word to increase attention to the key word, use action words, play music in background (lively music, marches, etc.) headphones. Input that smooth, rhythmical, low pitch, mellow tends to be calming.

Oral: sip drink, chew objects, provide cold or crunchy snack, water bottle, chew straws. Input that is warm, sweet, chewy tends to be calming.

Olfactory: smell or sniff objects, make a smell kit or play a game with identifying smells. Sweet, light smells tend to be calming.

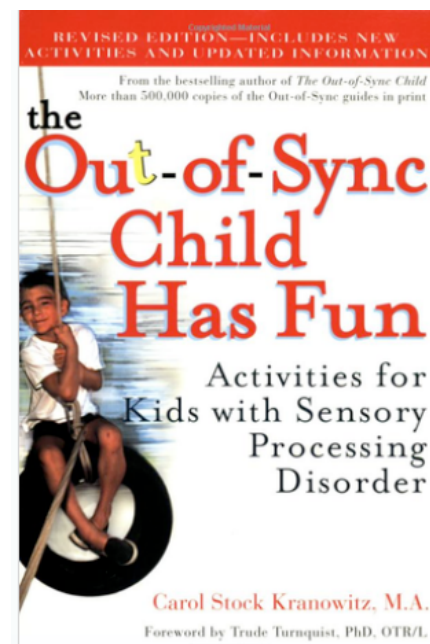
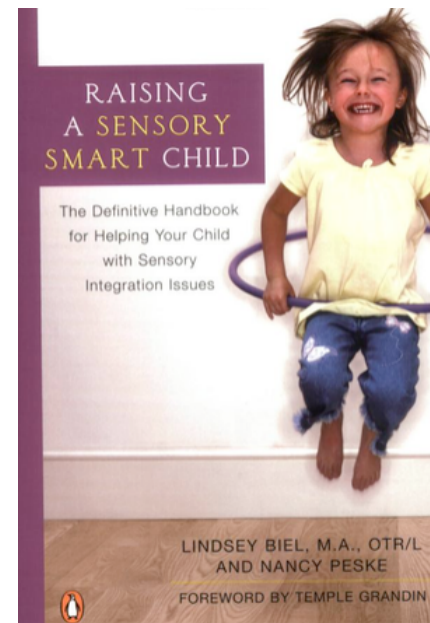
With children who have low registration, be careful not to calm the nervous system too much or the child may become lethargic. It can be challenging to balance when to provide lots of alerting and organizing sensory input, and when to

encourage calming input to help the child come down from sensory seeking or to be ready to do focused work. Each child is different. Considering the child's complete sensory profile is very helpful, as is consultation with an occupational therapist who has experience with sensory processing.

Without guidance and direction, the wisest thing to do is to trust the child's instincts, and to be there to support, protect, and guide.

During task performance, for example, many people will get up and seek input when they cannot sit still and focus any longer. Most often, when they understand there is a task demand, they will return to the task once the sensory needs have been met. Of course, some will need assistance to calm and organize at the end of a sensory session. If even that does not work, then there is a good chance that the task at hand is not a good match for the child-environment synergy at that time.

If someone seems to sensory seek to avoid doing his/her work, then there is an issue that needs to be addressed. Try Collaborative Problem Solving or seek advice.



I DO have a lot of faith in public education and have met some WONDERFUL administrators, teachers, professionals, and support staff in Vancouver Schools and schools in other districts.

I grew up and was trained in a place where there are MANY FEDERAL LAWS to protect and support children. I lived in a place where the system went into debt over their children when that was necessary, because ignoring problems that affect our kids is a betrayal of us all. A city like Vancouver, with it's 5 or 6 OTs, would have more than 30 OTs if it were in the states, and schools and children would get deep and meaningful, individualized support, fiscal cliff or no.

When and how did money become more important than children in Canada? When will people stand up and demand better than a third world educational system?

I just heard another horror story of a family in Vancouver now forced to keep their child home because of system failure. Some administrators and schools would like to work to improve this.

I will not list the really bad schools (at this time), but I will call out the GOOD.

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your
rights

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awesome guides from local
experts!

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