

What is sensory processing?

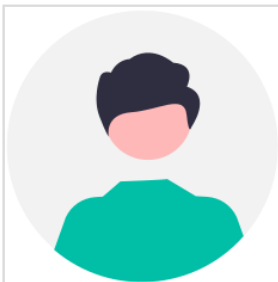


Sensory processing is the way that our body takes in and makes sense of information.

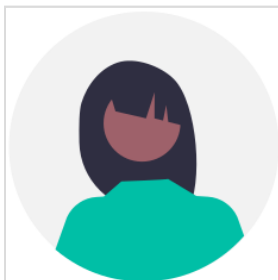
Our senses include hearing, vision, touch, taste and smell, as well as vestibular processing (which helps with balance and movement), proprioception (which is the awareness of our body in space), and interoception (our awareness of our internal body feelings).

We all use our senses every day to interact with and make sense of our environment.

When might a child/young person's sensory processing become a problem?



If they find sensory information overwhelming, they might struggle to cope with certain sensory experiences. They may try to avoid certain things, people or places.



If they are sensitive to certain sensations and find everyday tasks difficult to tolerate, such as showering, wearing certain clothes, eating or teeth-brushing.



If they seek out sensations to help them to regulate in a way that creates a problem in another way (for example, needing to move a lot during lessons).



If they are overwhelmed by sensory information it can make it more difficult for them to communicate their needs.

What is sensory overload?

To help understand how sensory information can overwhelm a child/young person, you can access the following 2 links:



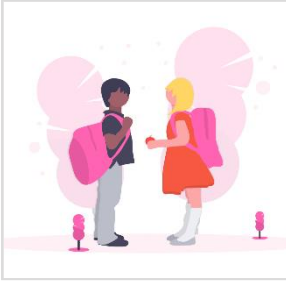
The BBC have created a short video 'Sensory Chaos' which outlines what it can be like to experience sensory overload:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0b5xjt4>



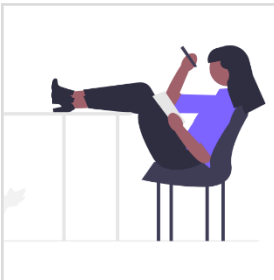
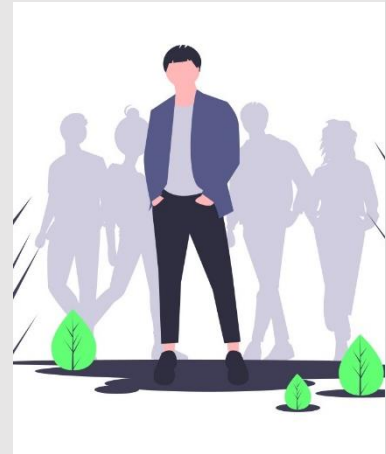
Carly's café: experience autism through Carly's eyes depicts Carly's experience of sensory overload when visiting a café:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmDGvquzn2k>



Sensory sensitivities can contribute, or lead, to higher stress and anxiety levels in a child/young person. This in turn can mean they're more tuned into sensory information and can become overwhelmed more easily.

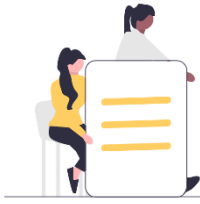
Children may present differently from one day to the next and their sensory needs may be context specific i.e. different at school or home and/or be influenced by other factors, such as mood, tiredness or stress levels. It is not unusual for a child to 'hold it together' all day at school and then show signs of overload when they get home.



A child's sensory processing differences may not be obvious at school, therefore communicating with school about the child's needs can help foster understanding about any sensory sensitivities or seeking behaviours.

To learn more about sensory processing, how this can impact children and young people and what strategies can help, access the following link to **Sheffield Children's NHS Trust website** and watch the '**Introduction to understanding sensory processing and your child**'. There are a number of other useful video clips and resources detailing specific areas of challenge i.e. washing, dressing, mealtimes, teeth brushing etc. with helpful strategies to try at home.

<https://www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/services/child-development-and-neurodisability/sensory-processing-difficulties/>



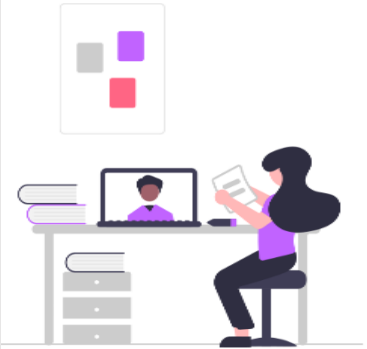
The Glasgow and Clyde NHS Trust also has some excellent resources for parents/carers and schools:

<https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/life-skills/joining-in-with-sensory-differences/>

In addition, **Sensory Integration Education** is a not for profit organisation who offer free online courses and resources:

Understanding sensory processing and integration in children (for parents and carers)

Understanding sensory processing and integration in teenagers and young adults (for parents and carers)

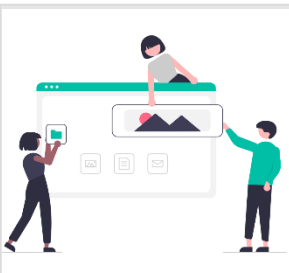


Free downloadable sensory survival kits:

- Back to school sensory survival kit
- Summer sensory survival kit
- Christmas sensory survival kit

Free downloadable 'a day in the life of ...' case studies to help illustrate how children and young people can experience sensory difficulties in their day to day life:

[Free Sensory Resources
\(sensoryintegrationeducation.com\)](https://sensoryintegrationeducation.com)



For more information and resources about autism and the diagnostic process please access our website:

<https://www.hdft.nhs.uk/services/childrens-services/specialist-childrens-services/autism-assessment/>