

## What is sensory processing?

Sensory processing is when our brain gets messages from our senses about what is happening around us or inside our body. Our brain helps to form messages and then tells our body to respond or act. When the sensory system has a hard time organizing this information, it may be hard to pay attention, play or calm down.

## Common sensory processing behaviors

### Sensory seeking

Child may:

- Love spinning, crashing into others, or lots of movement that get in the way of daily activities
- Like vibration or chewing on toys/clothing

### Sensory avoiding

Child may:

- Avoid or become upset with new movement or touch
- Be bothered by bright lights or hold hands over ears with loud sounds



### Over-responsive

Child may:

- Have melt downs or tantrums in crowded places
- Dislike tags in clothing or getting hands/feet messy

### Under-responsive

Child may:

- Seem like they are zoned out or not interested in activities
- Be unaware of bumps, cuts or messy hands, face or clothing

## What can occupational therapy do?

Occupational therapy engages all your child's senses to strengthen and grow their sensory and motor skills.

- Occupational therapists look at a child's ability to function in play, participate at school, and enjoy activities of daily life.
- Every child with sensory difficulties is different and will benefit from a specific set of activities (sometimes called a sensory diet) to get to a "just right place".
- A sensory diet can help with self-regulation and the ability to stay alert and participate in activities throughout the day.



## Resources

### Books:

*Understanding Your Child's Sensory Signals*  
by Angie Voss, OTR

*The Out-of-Sync Child*  
by Carol Kranowitz

### Websites/blogs:

- [mamaot.com](http://mamaot.com)
- [www.pathways.org/topics-of-development/7-senses/](http://www.pathways.org/topics-of-development/7-senses/)
- <https://www.spdstar.org/>

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Duke Children's Sensory Processing handout*



Occupational Therapy

# Sensory Processing

## What can occupational therapy do to help?

