Sensory Avoiding vs. Sensory Seeking

Heather Greutman
September 7, 2018

I am surrounded by sensory processing resources and education all the time. I tend to forget that others may not understand many of the terms related to sensory processing behaviors or sensory processing disorder. I recently saw a conversation on Facebook between some acquaintances that prompted me to address some common misconceptions when it comes to sensory processing. So today we are going to look at sensory avoiding vs. sensory seeking behaviors.

And did you know there is a third category for under-responsiveness to sensory input? Let's dive right in!

Sensory Avoiding vs Sensory Seeking

There are a few terms we need to dissect before we can begin to understand what sensory avoiding or sensory seeking behaviors can look like. You will see these terms referred to in a few different ways depending on what book you read, so I am including all the common phrases to describe each.

SENSORY AVOIDING

You will see sensory avoiding referred to as a few different things: hyper-responsive, over-responsive or hypersensitivity. Children with sensory avoiding behaviors are excessively responsive to sensory input. The slightest movement, touch, or sound could send you or a child into a negative behavior response. They will often avoid certain sensations, sounds, or environments because of this heightened awareness and response.

SENSORY SEEKING

You will see sensory seeking referred to as hypo-responsive or hyposensitivity. This means a child does not receive enough sensory input and is constantly looking for or “seeking” it to get to that “just-right” level of arousal. These behaviors can impact their day because they are not able to focus or attend to a task until they are at that just-right level.

UNDER-RESPONSIVE

There is a third category that can be overlooked and may seem similar to sensory avoiding, but it is very different. Children with an under-

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Encouraging Healthy Development
There are easy and fun things adults can do every day to encourage a child’s healthy development and growth. Find strategies for parents and caregivers that support a young child's development and learning by age from birth to five years. [http://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/HelpfulRes/EncourageHealthDev/index.html](http://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/HelpfulRes/EncourageHealthDev/index.html)

Watch for Changes Coming in Our Newsletter!
Beginning in January 2020 our newsletter will be issued every other month. The newsletter will have a new name and new look, and new content. It will be mailed to those who don’t have an email address on file three times a year—January, May, and September. If you are receiving this by mail and would like to receive all issues, please contact Annette Borman with your email address.

Learn more about how you can be Parent Aware Rated by attending one of our information sessions

**November 12, 2019**
1:30-3:00pm  
6:30-8:00pm  

Information sessions will be held in Anoka County and in Washington County

**Please RSVP to:** Annette Borman; 763-783-4711; aborman@accap.org

Parent Aware Online Information sessions

Saturday, October 19, 2019 at 10am  
Wednesday, October 30, 2019 at 7pm  
Saturday, November 16, 2019 at 9am

All online information sessions will be held by webinar. To RSVP please contact Tanisha Lungelow at 651-233-2297 or tlungelow@gmail.com. Please RSVP at least one day prior to the session to get a link emailed to you to join the session.
Join Us for Our October Professional Learning Community Meeting

We welcome Mary Muhs to lead us in learning more about science with young children. Mary is the Department Chair of Early Childhood Education at Rasmussen College.

Hope to see you there!

Please RSVP to: Annette Borman; 763-783-4711; aborman@accap.org
If you need an interpreter, please contact us seven (7) days before the event

Tuesday, October 15, 2019
6:30-8:30pm
Blaine Human Service Center
1201 89th Ave NE
Room 204
Blaine MN 55434

Thursday, October 17, 2019
6:30-8:30pm
Jerry’s Food Store
7760 Hargis Parkway,
Room 2
Woodbury MN 55129

Sensory Meltdowns vs. Tantrums

From Heather at Growing Hands On Kids:

Have you ever wondered what the difference is between a sensory meltdown and a tantrum?

When Sharla (co-author of Sensory Processing Explained) and I asked what your number one concern with sensory meltdowns were earlier in the year, this question was at the top of the list. It is a very complex topic! So much so, that we decided to build an entire video course around it. But we also wanted to give you a quick reference for how to tell if a behavior is a sensory meltdown or a tantrum.

Click the link below to get your FREE, one-page handout on sensory meltdowns vs. tantrums.

https://sensoryprocessingexplained.com/sensory-meltdowns-vs-tantrums-free-download/
Special Days in October!

- Cookie Month
- International Drum Month
- Week 1 Get Organized Week
- Week 2 Fire Prevention Week
- National Book Month
- National Pizza Month
- National Popcorn Popping Month

1. National Homemade Cookies Day
2. Look at the Leaves Day
3. Mad Hatter Day
4. American Touch Tag Day
5. Take Your Teddy Bear to Work Day
6. Curious Events Day
7. It’s My Party Day
8. National Fossil Day
9. Universal Music Day
10. Wear Something Gaudy Day
11. Count Your Buttons Day
12. National Bologna Day
13. National Candy Corn Day
14. Halloween

Coffee Ground Fossils

Author: Amanda Formaro

Kids will love making these coffee ground fossils and pretending they are on an archaeological dig! Make these fossils with coffee grounds, flour and more.

Supplies

- 1 cup of used coffee grounds
- 1/2 cup of cold coffee
- 1 cup of flour
- 1/2 cup of salt
- Wax paper
- Mixing bowl
- Some small objects to make impressions in the dough (Shaped cookie cutters work well)
- Empty can or a butter knife
- Toothpicks optional
- String to hang your fossil (optional)

Instructions

1. Get a grown up to brew a small amount of coffee (you’ll only need ½ cup for the activity) and save the grounds. Allow time for the coffee to cool. For younger kids, you may want to measure out the ingredients ahead of time, but older kids will enjoy measuring.
2. Stir together the coffee grounds, coffee, flour, and salt, until well mixed.
3. Knead the dough and then flatten it out onto the wax paper.
4. Use the can to cut out circles (or the cookie cutters/knife to cut out fun shapes).
5. Press the small objects firmly into the dough, to leave an imprint. Remove the object, and there’s your fossil! You can use a toothpick to poke a small hole near the edge of the fossil, if you want to hang it later.
6. Let the fossil dry and harden overnight.
7. You can hang it the next day, or use it in an archaeological dig!

Read a storybook for Curious Events Day!

- Curious George
- Something’s Fishy
- Curiosity
- Weird But True!
- Bug in a Vacuum
- H. A. Rey
responsive sensory system exhibit a diminished response to sensory input. More sensory input is needed than average in order to get a response. They can look like they are “lazy” or “tired” and just don’t pay attention to their surroundings.

**Common Misconceptions with Sensory Avoiding vs. Sensory Seeking**

A common misconception is that if a child is a sensory avoider in a few areas of sensory processing, then they will avoid all types of sensory input. This is simply not true. A child could avoid auditory or tactile input (sounds and touch) but could crave vestibular input (the sense of balance). And they could even avoid or crave different activities within the same sensory system.

What could this look like? You may have a child who can’t stand tags on their clothing or the seams in their socks or shirts (part of the tactile system). But they may crave a tight fitting shirt or need to wear a weighted vest or a lycra body sock for different situations (this is tactile and proprioceptive input).

You may have a child who loves to spin or hang upside down but is afraid of heights (this is all part of the vestibular system).

A child may also have sensory seeking behaviors with one sensory system or avoiding behaviors or under-responsive behaviors with a different one.

It is important to address a child’s sensory avoiding, sensory seeking, and under-responsive behaviors when we are looking at sensory processing. All three can play a part in helping them to learn strategies and self-regulation tools to get through their day.

I have a 9-day sensory processing email series that will give you a quick overview of each of the 8 sensory systems, including avoiding, seeking, and under-responsive behaviors. You can sign up for it below!


If you’d rather not sign up with an email address, I also have a blog post on addressing each of the eight sensory systems at


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**Singing the Senses**

(Sung to "Bingo")

We use five senses everyday
To help us learn and play.
See, hear, smell, touch, taste
See, hear, smell, touch, taste
See, hear, smell, touch, taste
We use these everyday.

**All of Me**

My hands are for clapping
My arms can hug tight
My fingers can snap
Or can turn out the light
My legs are for jumping
My eyes help me see
This is my body,
And I love all of me!

**Five Little Senses**

Five little senses are what I need
To use when things are near
I use my eyes to look and see
I use my ears to hear
I use my nose to smell things
I use my hands to touch
I use my mouth to taste
The things I love to eat so much
Five little senses standing in a row
To see, hear, smell, touch and taste
The things I need to know

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FALL SAFETY TIPS FOR CHILDREN

Back-to-school is in full swing, and cooler days are setting in. Keep kids safe this Autumn:

- Check playground equipment for sharp edges, faulty equipment, and make sure kids can’t squeeze their heads between bars.
- Always have your child wear protective sports gear, even if she’s practicing alone at home.

With daylight growing shorter, kids still like to play outside on warm evenings. Make sure kids wear bright-colored clothing and sneakers so drivers can easily see them.
- Hold your child’s hand in parking lots. Cars backing out of parking spaces will have a harder time spotting young children when it’s dark outside.

Kids may want to help rake leaves and play in the leaf piles. Keep sharp, dangerous tools stored away and out of sight of children.

Teach children to wash their hands often to avoid getting sick and spreading germs.

- With the holidays fast approaching: Check gifts for loose strings and ribbons, as they could strangle or choke young children.
  - Store gift wrapping materials out of sight of young children.
  - Check all decorative materials for fire hazards.
  - Use plastic or flameless candles to avoid burns and fires.
  - Keep young children out of the kitchen and away from hot ovens. Turn pot handles inward and out of the reach of children.

Avoid pediatric burns by always checking the temperature of hot soup, water and cider before serving to children.

Dress children in weather-appropriate clothing to avoid sickness and the common cold.
- Choose light layers and remove damp clothing immediately.

Make sure your childcare center has safe, evening pick up protocols in place.
- As it gets dark outside, unwanted tailgaters may try to follow parents into the facility. Make sure security cameras and standard pick up and drop off procedures are in use.
- Make sure the parking lot is brightly lit, and free of tall bushes and dumpsters, as they can create hiding places.