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NEURODEVELOPMENTAL TEAM

ACTIVITIES TO ASSIST IN THE REDUCTION OF TACTILE SENSITIVITY FOR OLDER CHILDREN



The person with tactile sensitivity responds too intensely to information from this sensory system. They become over aroused by normal levels of sensation from the tactile system and can be distractible as they constantly pay attention to stimuli even if it is not relevant to them or their situation. They will have difficulties paying attention and attending to everyday tasks. Young people who are over responsive to information from the tactile system can experience soft touch as uncomfortable or even painful. Their sensitivities are likely to increase if they are anxious or in a heightened state. The following is a list of activities that can help to reduce tactile sensitivity.

- ✚ Encourage the child to wash with textured soaps and to use different textured bath scrubbers. The use of textured soaps and scrubbers can assist in the reduction of tactile sensitivity.
- ✚ Provide the child with opportunities to engage in deep pressure activities, running, bouncing, climbing, using a trampoline, crawling, using playground equipment, horse riding, swimming etc. This will also assist in providing Proprioceptive and Vestibular input.
- ✚ Encourage the child to use different textures to draw shapes or letters using his fingers i.e. sand, shaving cream, cornflour gloop, peanut butter, etc. This will also provide kinaesthetic feedback to assist in the development of letter formation.
- ✚ Cooking is an excellent activity for the reduction of tactile sensitivity. Encourage the child to use his hands to mix up dough, pastry etc. Decorating biscuits and cakes with sugar icing (if allowed) can be an excellent motivator to getting hands sticky.
- ✚ It is important for adults caring for and working with children with tactile sensitivity to be aware that different touch particularly light unexpected touch can often cause a negative reaction. The child should be approached (whenever possible) from the front so that he can see you coming.
- ✚ Labels on clothing can often irritate the child with tactile sensitivity and it helps if these can be removed prior to wearing. They can also be irritated by the seams of socks, turning socks inside out or wearing seamless socks can help.
- ✚ Also new clothing can often appear scratchy to children with these difficulties and it often helps to wash them prior to wearing. Choosing softer textures clothes e.g. soft cottons and fleece type materials etc. can also help.
- ✚ Wearing a soft familiar vest or other undergarment can help the young person to tolerate new or unfamiliar clothes, this can be tucked into their underpants to help reduce the irritation of labels and waistbands on trousers.

NB It is important to remember at all times that children who experience tactile defensiveness do not process touch in the same way as we do and can often overreact or become distressed by what we would consider to be normal touch.

It is also very important to gradually introduce different textures, substances etc. and to remove them at once if the child is showing distress. Tolerance must be gradually built up at the pace of the child.