



Pediatric Development Center

*Newsletter
April 2008*

We provide occupational therapy evaluation, treatment and consultation for children with developmental delays, autism/Asperger, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, sensory processing disorders, attention, behavioral concerns, handwriting, and other areas of weakness.

361 US Route One, Falmouth
(207) 781-4830

Parent Support Group:

We want to support parents in any way we can and would like to have a monthly meeting to discuss your issues. Please call the office to let us know when would be good for you and we will put together a meeting. Look for upcoming courses for summer.

Good Books

Physical Activities for Improving Children's Learning and Behavior by Billy Ann Cheatum and Allison Hammond

Helping Hyperactive Kids – A Sensory Integration Approach by Lynn Horowitz, OT and Cecile Rost, PT

Making the Brain – Body Connection by Sharon Promislow

More on the Sensory Diet

Parents always want to know, what is a sensory diet and what are good activities to do. A sensory diet describes the specific sensory activities used throughout the day to

fuel the body to attain an organized state, and stay there. "By providing beneficial sensory input throughout the day, you can create profound, long-lasting changes in your child's nervous system, which in time will become permanent." **Raising a Sensory Smart Child** What guides the sensory diet is providing the right kind of sensory input at the right time and in the right amount, so the child does not need to resort to inappropriate ways to attain what they need. Last month provided activities for the proprioceptive, vestibular and tactile systems.

Auditory: Auditory input is what we hear and is neuroanatomically connected with the vestibular sense. In addition to listening to various types of music, both recorded and live, here are some ways to get calming and organizing auditory input.

Get out in nature and listen. Go to the beach or sit still and listen to a thunderstorm or windstorm. If you hear birds singing, try to identify what direction a given bird is calling from.

Listen to natural sounds recordings such as a rainstorm, waves crashing against the beach, or birds in the forest. Sometimes natural sound recordings also feature light instrumentation with flutes, keyboards, etc.

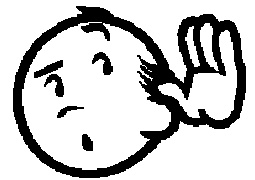
Play a listening game: you and your child sit very quietly and try to identify the sounds you hear (traffic, the hum of the refrigerator, a door shutting, etc.).

Therapeutic Listening® is computer modified music, listened to through open ear headphones, and has been successful with sensory regulation.
www.vitallinks.net

Encourage your child to play a musical instrument. For a child with auditory sensitivity,

controlling the sounds she hears can be especially helpful. If your child is fearful of loud noises, let him control the volume on the stereo, exploring soft vs. loud music.

Get a white noise machine, tabletop rocks-and-water fountain, or aquarium.



Visual: If your child is visually distractible, simplify the visual field in his home or school environment for a calming effect. Alternately, if your child seems visually "tuned out," i.e., does not seem to respond easily to visual stimulation, add brightly colored objects to attract visual attention. For example, a child who has trouble getting aroused for play may be attracted by a brightly painted toy chest filled with appealing colored toys.

Hide clutter in bins or boxes or behind curtains or doors—a simple, solid-color curtain hung over a bookshelf instantly reduces visual clutter.

Use solid colored rugs instead of patterned ones and solid-colored walls (for example, avoid patterned wallpaper).

Have your child sit at the front of a classroom where there is less visual distraction. He may also need to sit away from the window to avoid the distraction of the outdoors. Keep in mind, however, that some children do best sitting in the back of the room so they can monitor what other kids are doing without constantly turning around. Work with the teacher to see which

seating arrangement works best for your child.

Avoid toys, clothes, towels, etc., in colors that your child find stress-inducing such as bright orange, yellow, and red (your child may have a different "hated" color.)



Smell: If your child has sensory problems, certain odors can stimulate, calm, or send him into sensory overload.

Explore scents with your child to find the ones that work best to meet your goal (either to soothe or to wake up). While everyone has different preferences, vanilla and rose are generally calming. Peppermint and citrus are usually alerting. Let's say your child needs help staying calm and loves vanilla. You can use vanilla soaps and bath oils to ease bath time, vanilla candles or oils in an aromatherapy burner or machine at bedtime, and vanilla body lotion. Note: Avoid lavender and tea tree oil products for boys as several recent studies show a link with enlarged breast development in boys. It's probably safest to avoid using these products for girls as well.

If your child is overtired at the mall and you know scents help, have her smell her favorite scent or stop into a strongly-smelling store that sells candles and soaps.

Play a smelling game with your SI child. Have her close her eyes or wear a blindfold and try to identify smells such as maple syrup, apple, peanut butter, and soap.

Life stinks sometimes. Accept your child's opinion about something she thinks smells "gross." Then help her find something that smells nice.



Oral: From infancy to adulthood, we all gain comfort and self-regulate through oral activities. It begins with sucking on a nipple, pacifier and thumb, to eventually sucking through straws, chewing on straws or coffee stirrers, chewing gum and the foods we choose. Chewing provides good proprioceptive input.

For chewing or biting, chewy tubes or chewy beads on a necklace; vibrating teethingers, P's and Q's as well as the hammer for younger children. Theratubing placed on a pencil or Chew Ease Pencil toppers for school age children.

Foods providing proprioceptive input include gum, fruit leathers, pretzel rods, bagels, carrots, apples, etc.

Blowing activities increase muscle tone and becomes calming. Blow on food to cool it down, blow toys such as whistles and pin wheels, blow feathers and cotton balls off your hand, blow pom pom balls across the table, blow bubbles, blow soapy water through a straw, use of long curled straws, BLO pens, etc.

Taste input is strongly influenced by smell (as an experiment, chew some gum until the flavor is gone, then hold a lemon under your nose; the gum will taste like lemon).

Strong tastes can stimulate the mouth of a child with SI and make him more willing to try new foods. Before presenting new foods, let the child have one peppermint, sour gummy bear, or other strong-flavored food.

If your child does not have a strong negative reaction to refined sugar (becomes very "hyper" or gets very sleepy), get an assortment of flavored jellybeans. Eat one at a time, and have her guess which flavor it is.

Children will be more likely to taste something if they help make it. Let him help you select foods. For example, let him choose between chicken or fish, string beans or sugar snaps, and potato or rice. Then let your child arrange the meat in the baking pan, break off vegetable tips and dump in water, and so on. Let him help you arrange food on each plate into a pleasing presentation.

Don't forget to play with your food. A so-called picky eater may be more willing to eat "rocks and trees" than meatballs and broccoli.

Sweet tends to be calming, where fruity, spicy, hot, or salty will be alerting. Cold is also alerting and warm calming. Sucking, blowing and chewing are organizing.