



Pediatric Development
Center

Newsletter



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.

Contact us for further information:

125 Presumpscot St. Portland, ME. (207) 699-5531

Parent Support Group:

We want to support parents in any way we can and would like to have a monthly meeting to discuss your concerns. Please call the office to let us know when would be good for you and we will put together a meeting. 699-5531

Good Resource:

www.sensory-processing-disorder.com

Inclement Weather

Throughout the winter we will experience snow and ice. Our office is usually open unless the weather is extremely bad. It is unpredictable how the day will go, whether the roads will clear early or a storm will come in later. Your therapist or the office will contact you to determine the best route of action. In case of very severe weather we will list a clinic closing on WCSH 6. Also, please remember to call if your child is sick and will not be coming to the clinic.

Sensory Strategies for Surviving the Holiday Season

Written by Jamie Levine, OTR/L



Many children are either over-stimulated or under-stimulated by their senses, including sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, and/or movement. Everyone uses their senses to process and understand the world around them. When these senses are not integrated properly, the world can be a scary place, particularly during the holiday season.

A child who is visually sensitive may easily be overwhelmed by holiday lights and a sound sensitive child can be over-stimulated by a noisy party with music. A child who is sensitive to touch may interpret a light bump as a push or shove and be rattled in a large crowd. In response, children with Sensory Integration Dysfunction often act out, demonstrating behaviors that may appear extreme and inappropriate for the particular situation.

Fortunately, a number of simple sensory strategies can help your child adapt to the intense stimulation surrounding the holiday season:

Be Sound Sensitive: Provide ear plugs for loud environments. Standard headphones with relaxing music may calm children in noisy surroundings. The Therapeutic Listening Program, which utilizes specialized headphones and formatted music, provides excellent relief for children with auditory sensitivities.

Be Space Sensitive: When attending a crowded event, identify a quiet, safe space your child can go to if over-stimulated. Indicate the location at the start of the event and encourage your child to ask to be taken there if a break from the crowd is needed.

Be Movement Sensitive: It is difficult for children to sit

quietly for long periods of time. This is particularly true for movement seeking children. Encourage safe, structured movement activities every 1-2 hours. Simple movement breaks can include jumping jacks, wall push-ups, toe touches, or “shaking the sillies out” of each body part.

Be Touch Sensitive: Allow your child to wear clothing he/she finds comfortable. Avoid pre-party conflict even if causal clothes may result in a few raised eyebrows. Uncomfortable clothing may ruin a child’s and your evening.

Prepare for Food Sensitivities: Never expect party hosts to be prepared for your food sensitive child. Bring along something you know your child will eat to avoid meltdowns at mealtime.

Dealing with Change: Prepare the child for holiday imposed schedule changes in advance. Use daily calendars or schedule boards listing upcoming activities. Add pictures if necessary. Activities can be listed hourly, daily, or weekly depending upon the child’s needs. Review the day’s activities with your child each morning.

One of the most important aspects of dealing with your sensory sensitive child is trying to relax yourself! Before a potentially challenging event, take some time to yourself to relax and rejuvenate. Children sense the moods of those

around them. If you are already stressed with anticipation, the child may instinctively become so as well. If you are relaxed and prepared, you will be able to remain calm if difficulties arise. Your child will react positively to your calm response.

Finally, remember the purpose of the holidays! Holidays are meant to be joyful, happy occasions. Enjoy yourself and just do the best that you can. You do not have to apologize for doing what is appropriate for you and your family. Take pleasure in the holiday season!

Holiday Kitchen Fine Motor Fun

Involving your child in food preparation and other kitchen tasks is a great way to develop their fine motor skills, including grasp, bilateral coordination and tool use. Have them help you in the kitchen as you prepare holiday meals!

* Using a potato peeler. It is often easier to start with carrots. A good peeler makes a huge difference.



* Spreading with a knife. Start with spreading on crackers or toast rather than soft bread.

* Cutting with a knife and fork. Cutting pancakes is a good place to start.

* Using scissors to snip fresh herbs.

* Using a rolling pin to roll out cookie dough.

* Kneading bread dough.

* For older children, cracking an egg.

* Using a manual egg beater.

* Folding napkins.

* Removing strawberry leaves with a strawberry huller.

Holiday Hopscotch

Allow children to use their gross motor skills and number recognition by playing hopscotch. Use 10 pieces of heavy cardboard, or poster board. Draw and color a holiday icon such as turkeys, Christmas trees, snowflakes, etc. on the cards and number them 1-10. You can also laminate the cards. Arrange on the floor in the traditional hopscotch pattern. Tape the cards to the floor. Have the children take turns. Variation: you can use this game any time for any holiday/season - use a different theme: groundhogs, hearts, pumpkins, four leaf clovers, etc.