

## What is Sensory Processing Disorder?

*Sensory integration* is a normal, neurological, developmental process which begins in the womb and continues throughout one's life. Sensory processing is the process by which our brain takes in sensory input, organizes it and interprets this information for use.

An individual with sensory integration disorder would have an inability to organize sensory information that comes through the senses.

SI, Sensory Integration, is the process by which the brain receives information from the direct five senses (vision, hearing, movement, touch, taste), and interprets it so we can respond in an appropriate, effective, and meaningful way.

Sensory processing is something most of us don't think about as it happens naturally, unconsciously, and spontaneously throughout our day.

However, some children's central nervous system has difficulty accurately perceiving or integrating the information it receives. If this neurological process becomes disrupted somewhere in the loop of intake, organization or output, then normal development and adaptive responses will not be achieved. As a result, learning, physical and emotional development, as well as behavior may be impacted.

It is this disruption which yields a neurological dysfunction called Sensory Integration Dysfunction/Sensory Processing Disorder.

### **What Does SID Look Like?**

It can affect an individual in only one-sense or in multiple senses. An individual with SID might overreact to sensation and find light, sound, contact, or food to be unbearable. It could also cause an individual to not react to stimulation (e.g. not reacting to extreme cold).

In children whose sensory processing of messages from the muscles and joints is impaired, posture and motor skills can be affected. These are the "floppy babies" who worry new parents and the kids who get called "klutz" on the playground. Still other children exhibit an appetite for sensation that is in perpetual overdrive. These kids often are misdiagnosed - and inappropriately medicated - for ADHD.

### **Do all children on the Autism spectrum have Sensory Integration difficulties?**

It is believed that 95% of children on the Autism spectrum have sensory integration difficulties. Children on the spectrum typically have a different way of perceiving the environment. This different sensory perception can interfere with the child's ability to attend, learn, interact with the environment, handle unpredictable situations and develop appropriate peer relationships. OT utilizes Sensory Integration therapy to help these children manage and master their environment as best as possible