Is it SENSORY, or is it BEHAVIOR?

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What is “Sensory”?
- Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD)
- Commonly seen with
  - Autism
  - Asperger’s Syndrome
  - ADD/ADHD
  - OCD
  - Anxiety
  - Cerebral Palsy
  - Other mental health conditions

Sensory Integration Therapy
- Using various sensory inputs to create an optimal level of arousal as needed to maximize learning experiences and improve overall health

Sensory Integration Therapy
- Uses the 5 basic senses: Sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch...
  - Plus
    - Vestibular: body’s relationship to the earth’s gravitational pull (inner ear)
    - Proprioceptive: body’s relationship to itself (joints)

Sensory Integration Therapy
- Decreases sensory seeking behaviors by providing input in an appropriate manner
- Decreases sensory sensitivities through gentle and repetitive exposure

Sensory vs. Behavior
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- For every negative reaction, there is usually a sensory AND a behavior component
  - Holidays = sensory overload
  - Long car trip = Sensory deprived
  - Both situations cause sensory imbalance (and crankiness!)
- Combination of being a sensory detective and basic behavior modification techniques usually works best.
Behavior Reactions

- Child can usually turn negative reaction on and off like a switch.
- Cry/tantrum, but USUALLY no tears
- Responds well to "tough LOVE", lots of structure and clear boundaries.

Sensory Reactions

- Unable to calm self down immediately, even if you give them what they want. The negative reaction simply spirals out of control, then requires time to wind down.
- Responds well to some flexibility for sensory situations within clear boundaries, routine, and structure.
- Behavior modification alone will be USELESS

Behavior Tricks

- Clearly defined rules, expectations, boundaries
- Consistent rewards and reasonable consequences (all clearly and simply defined ahead of time)
- CONSISTENCY
- Give 1 warning with stated consequence, then actually FOLLOW THROUGH with stated consequence if needed.

Sensory Tricks

- Provide sensory input at regular intervals AT LEAST every 2 hours
- Positive time out in a calm space
- Learn the child's sensory triggers and best ways to avoid/modify/adapt to them

Common Sensory Triggers

- Grooming activities
  - Hair care: washing, cutting, combing
  - Clipping nails
  - Brushing teeth
  - Bath/shower
  - Lotion
- Smells
- Clothing: tags, socks, jeans, pants/shorts, etc.
- Food (for picky eaters)
- Being surrounded by unpredictable people (fear of being touched)

Common Sensory Triggers

- Vestibular Insecurity
  - Swinging
  - Playground equipment
  - Fear of heights
- Loud/noisy environments
  - P.E
  - Lunch room
- Birthday parties
- Visual Clutter (messy room)
- Bare feet
Calming Input: Oral
- Sucking/blowing
  - Straws
  - Bubbles
- Biting/chewing
  - Chew necklaces
  - Gum
  - Hard candies
- Strong flavors
  - Spicy/hot (Salsa, cinnamon)
  - Sour
  - Mint

Calming Input: Proprioceptive
- Bear hugs
- Weighted vest/blankets
- Weight bearing exercises (pushups)
- Jumping
- Running
- Swaddling
- Make “sandwich” with couch cushions
- Make “burrito” with quilt

Calming Input: Vestibular
- Swinging
- Spinning
- Running
- Jumping
- Rocking
- Climbing

- NOTE: Some people find vestibular input scary rather than calming.

Tricks for BOTH!!!
- STRUCTURE/ROUTINE
- Ask child to repeat back auditory directions
- Use few words and simple commands
- Picture/written schedules
- Timers

Tricks for BOTH!!!
- Stay calm!
- Rule out language delay
- Social stories
- Sing! “Where is Thumbkin?” can be adapted to prepare most transitions
- Give reasonable choices
  - Brushing teeth is NOT an option, choosing the red or the blue toothbrush IS an option

Tricks for BOTH!!!
- Use kids “against” each other as positive peers: “Who wants to help me…?”
- “What animal do you want to be?” as you take your bath, get dressed, any transition...

- REGULAR PROPRIOCEPTIVE/VESTIBULAR INPUT

- NO BAD KIDS!!!
Favorite Sensory “Toys”

- Mini Trampolines
- Weighted vests/snakes
- Fidget toys
- Oral input
  - Chew necklaces/toys
  - Straws
  - Water bottles/ juice boxes
  - Whistles/bubbles
- Covering ears with hoodies/ headphones/ earplugs
- Theraband on chair legs
- Beach ball seats

Sensory Hints

- Oral and proprioceptive input are universal calmers
- Quickest way to provide sensory input is through the mouth and groin area
  - Therefore, if you want a child to keep his/her hands out of pants, provide more oral input.
- Never simply take away an unwanted sensory input; need to replace it

Favorite Websites

- www.adhdcentral.com: OT website, best selection for various sensory toys and excellent mouth chews
- www.bridgestore.com: cheapest prices for all therapy equipment and fairly good selection
- www.adhdsnippet.com: various parent resources and sensory information

Rule Out Medical Components

- SLEEP!!!
- GI (stomach) issues
- Food/environmental allergies
- Expressive/receptive language delays
- Anxiety/OCD/mental health issues
- Seizures/neurological conditions

Questions, comments, critique, discussion...