



A STEP AHEAD

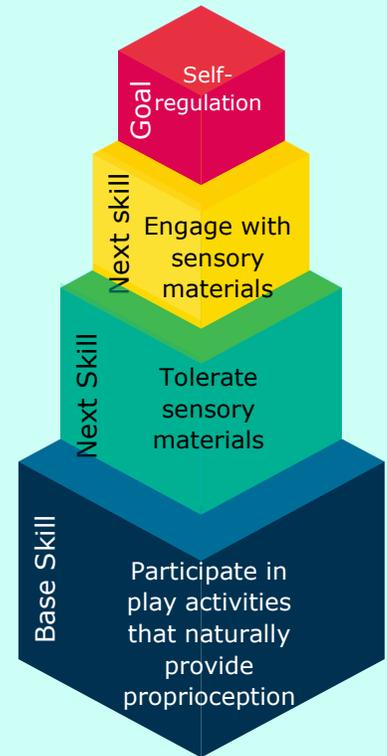
Sensory processing: The basics

When children have difficulty processing sensory information, they may be:

Sensory defensive: Avoid touching/eating certain textures, or avoid sounds, movement, tastes, or bright light.

Under responsive: Not notice things going on around them, not responding to sounds or sights, not noticing when they are hungry, sleepy, or need to use the bathroom.

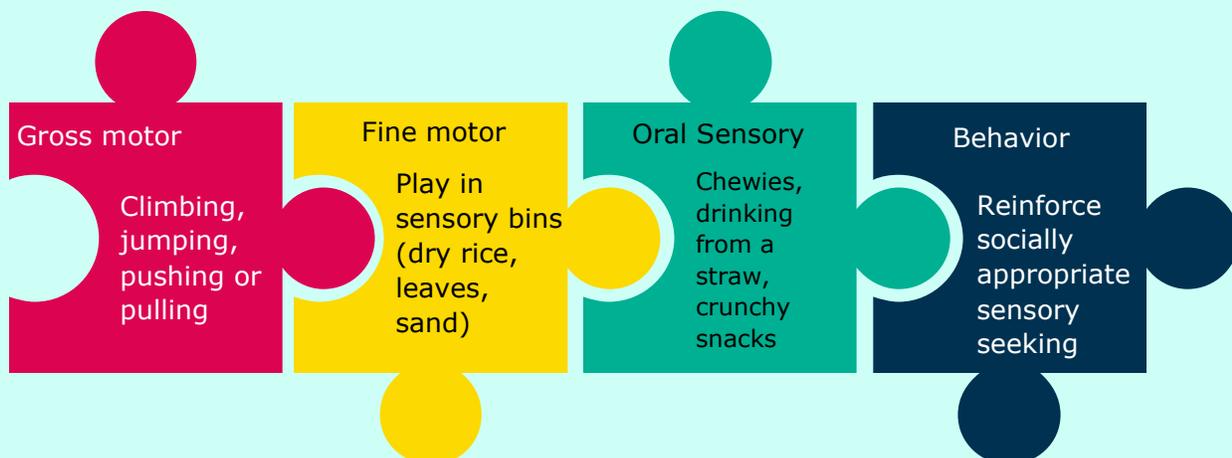
Seeking: Children who are under responsive may seek out intense sensory experiences to “dial up” the input so they can get the same sensory information as others. They may seem always on the move or show poor attention.



What is proprioception and why is it important?

Proprioceptors are sensory receptors in the skin, joints, and muscles that tell us where our body is in space. Proprioceptive activities tell our brain to calm, organize, and get ready for new sensory information to come in. Some children are under responsive to proprioceptive input which means they need more intense input to help their brains organize, calm, and pay attention.

For kids who have sensory differences, we can use heavy work (proprioceptive input) to help kids get ready to accept new sensory information and process that information so that they are able to stay self-regulated throughout the day and when they encounter sensations that make them uncomfortable (touching or eating different textures, sounds, light) or sensations that they may not normally register.



The goal of participating in sensory activities is to bring the child's reaction to the sensation in line with the level of input.

For example: Turning to look when hearing a loud sound instead of crying and running away or not noticing at all.

Troubleshooting tips:

Allow your child time and a quiet space to escape overwhelming sensory experiences with a calming area. This could be a big box with pillows, a quiet corner with a soft blanket and books, a small tent or a hammock under a table or bunk bed.



References:

Sensory Processing Disorder: Heavy Work Activities (Proprioceptive Input)... They Need Them, They Crave Them!

<https://www.sensory-processing-disorder.com/heavy-work-activities.html>

Heavy work activities:

Gross motor:

- Carrying objects such as a heavy backpack, groceries, moving or stacking books or chairs.
- Pushing or pulling objects like a shopping cart filled with toys, laundry basket, tug of war, digging with a shovel.
- Jumping on a trampoline, into pillows, on a therapy ball.
- Animal walks (crab walk, bear crawl, kangaroo hop).
- Squishing between pillows or heavy blankets.

Fine motor:

- Working at a vertical surface (chalk board, easel).
- Playdough squeezing, pinching, rolling out, pushing through an extruder.

Oral motor:

- Eating chewy foods (dried fruit, beef jerky, bagels, granola bars).
- Sucking on lollipops, milkshake through a straw, thin/long/curly straws.
- Blowing activities (bubbles, blower party favors, pinwheels).

Resources:

Book: The Out-of-Synch Child: Recognizing and coping with Sensory Processing Disorder

<https://out-of-sync-child.com/>

Sensory Play at Home: Proprioceptive Games

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWtmkjd45so>

(remember to never force proprioceptive input, make it fun and voluntary!)