Sensory Differences

This advice sheet is for use alongside the CAT Sensory Profile Tool to explain the various sensory differences. Autistic learners can be hyper (over) sensitive or hypo (under) sensitive in any of the areas outlined below.



Visual: Input from the eyes about vision and perception. This is both focused and peripheral vision.



Auditory: Input from the ears about sounds and pitch.



Tactile: Input from the skin receptors about touch, pressure, temperature, pain, and movement of the hairs on the skin.



Olfactory: Input from the nose about smells and olfaction.



Gustatory: Input from the mouth and taste buds about foods and textures.



Interoception: Input from inside of the body like hunger, thirst, feeling hot or cold, fatigue, or a full bladder. The physical reactions to emotions for example, feeling of butterflies.



Proprioception: Input from the muscles and joints about body position, weight, pressure, stretch, movement, and changes in position in space.

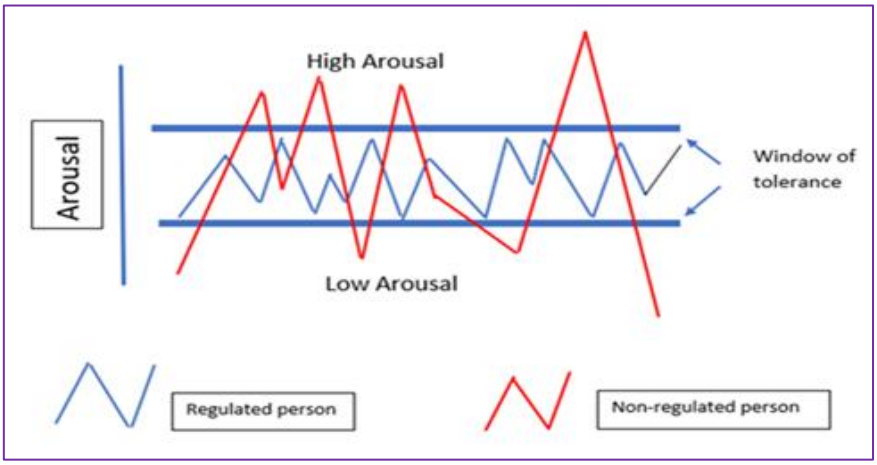


Vestibular: Input from the inner ear about equilibrium, gravitational changes, movement experiences, and position in space.

When considering the sensory input experienced by pupils, we should also consider their response. A child can display signs of feeling overwhelmed or be sensory avoidant as a result of sensory input. Likewise, they may display sensory seeking behaviours if they are underwhelmed.

The illustration below helps us to understand the way in which we process and respond to sensory input varies according to stimuli that affects our 'Window of Tolerance'.

We want learners to maintain a sense of regulation, this means allowing them to maintain a level of alertness to respond appropriately across environments to the sensory stimuli present.



DISCLAIMER

The information that members of staff from the Communication and Autism Team (CAT) share with you about sensory activities for your child/young person/young person is to help them regulate and balance their arousal and sensory system. It is important to consider the developmental stage and ability of any child/young person/young person when using sensory activities.

All activities and strategies that are recommended by the CAT Team are not endorsed by Physiotherapists or Occupational Therapists. For a full assessment or specific Sensory Integration Therapy, it is necessary to contact an Occupational Therapist.

Using specific resources and equipment is entirely up to the individual. You must provide appropriate support and ensure the users safety, and other in the environment, at all times. The CAT Team cannot be held responsible for any use/misuse or failure of activities or injury that may occur.

For more information regarding Birmingham SEND Occupational Therapy Services please follow the link below:

https://www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk/send_support_services_menu/district-occupational-therapists/

For more information, please speak to your allocated school CAT.

Communication & Autism Team