

# Challenging Behavior:

Is it Sensory, Behavior  
or Both?

Priscila Yu, OTR/L

Teresa Haney, MS

Tracy Infant Center, California

# Outline

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Review Sensory Processing & Strategies (10)

Define Behavior & Functions of Behavior (5)

Review Behavioral Strategies (5)

Investigating Sensory vs Behavior (10)

Case Studies (15mins-20 mins)

Intro/Questions: 10

# WHAT IS SENSORY?

## SENSORY INTEGRATION

- Sensory Integration is the organization of sensations for use. We are always getting a multitude of sensory information from the environment.
- Each time we receive this sensory input, the brain must (1) perceive it, (2) interpret it by integrating all the different pieces, (3) make a plan for responding (motor planning) and (4) take action (execution).

## HOW THE BRAIN WORKS

Imagine a child touching a hot stove with his finger. What happens?



# SENSATIONS



1. Visual Processing:  
**SIGHT**
2. Auditory Processing:  
**SOUND**
3. Tactile Processing:  
**TOUCH**
4. Oral Processing:  
**TASTE**
5. Olfactory Processing:  
**SMELL**
6. Vestibular Processing  
**BALANCE**
7. Proprioceptive  
Processing:  
**BODY AWARENESS**

# SENSORY PROFILE

## LOW THRESHOLD

- React easily to a small amount of sensory input
- Respond more often
- Register a lot of detail and changes around you
- ***Sensory Sensitivity***
- ***Sensation Avoiding***

## HIGH THRESHOLD

- Require more intensity of sensation to react
- Respond to sensation less often
- Look for activities with more intense sensory input
- ***Low Registration***
- ***Sensation Seeking***

# 4 types of Sensory Processing Disorder

**LOW REGISTRATION: HIGH**



**SENSATION SEEKING: HIGH**



**SENSORY SENSITIVITY: LOW**



**SENSATION AVOIDING: LOW**



# Sensory Strategies

## **LOW REGISTRATION**

**Behaviors observed:** lethargic, uninterested, difficulty attending

- Novelty- Change it up!
- Increase intensity of sensory input
  - Exercise to start the day
  - Movement breaks
  - Brighter lights

## **SENSORY SENSITIVITY**

**Behaviors observed:** Difficulty focusing, easily distracted

- Sensory Input that is soothing/calming
  - Lower the lighting
  - Talking softly
  - Relaxing music
- Consistency in routine, preteaching and preparation for change

## **SENSATION SEEKING**

**Behavior observed:** “class clown”, “all over the place”, impulsive

- Heavy Work
- Crunchy/chewy types of snacks
- Fidgets
- Organized sports

## **SENSATION AVOIDING**

**Behaviors observed:** quiet, withdraws from activities, fearful, uncooperative

- Predictability and Consistency
  - Calming activities (vestibular and proprioception throughout the day)
  - Gradual involvement with activities

# “Fight or flight”

## What Does “Fight or Flight” Look Like?

- Hitting, kicking, biting, spitting, pushing (especially while standing in line or in new challenging/overwhelming situations or activities)
- Trying to run or hide from the situation
- Covering ears or eyes
- Crying or screaming
- Shutting down completely and not speaking or responding





# Behavior.... Defined



1 a: the manner of conducting oneself

b: anything that an organism does involving action and response to stimulation

c: the response of an individual, group, or species to its environment

2: the way in which someone behaves

3: the way in which something functions or operates

Merriam-Webster

## Challenging Behavior



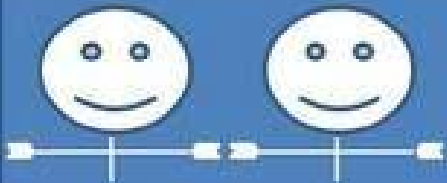

Self-injury, injury to others, cause damage to the physical environment, and/or interfere with the acquisition of new skills and/or socially isolate the learner

(Doss & Reichle, 1991)

# 4 Functions of Behavior

What it does for me

When it happens

<b>S</b> Sensory		Provides preferred sensory experiences; behaviour feels good to do	Anytime, even when alone. Especially if I'm anxious
<b>E</b> Escape		Removes undesired activities or interactions	When task is too: hard, easy, boring, or scary
<b>A</b> Attention		Provides access to people or interactions	When I want social interaction
<b>T</b> Tangibles		Provides preferred items or activities	When I want a preferred item or activity

# Behavioral Concepts

## **Behavior Analysis**

A scientifically validated approach to understanding behavior and how it is affected by the environment (influence)

## **Behavior Management**

Actions teachers and parents engage in to enhance the probability that children, individually and in groups, will develop effective behaviors that are personally fulfilling, productive and socially acceptable

(Walker & Shea, 1999; Shea & Bauer, 1987)



A → B → C

*Antecedent*  
*Consequence*

*Behavior*

# Behavioral Strategies

## **General**

- Decrease Inappropriate behavior
- Teach appropriate behavior
- Limit punishment
- Age-appropriate limits
- Communication

## **Attention**

- Noncontingent reinforcement
- Ignore
- Modeling
- Rituals/Routines

## **Escape**

- Redirection
- Schedule
- Antecedent Modification
- Provide Breaks

## **Tangible**

- Visual reminder
- Token System
- Give Choices
- Reinforcement



# Defining the Behavior

## Dimension

## Definition

## Example

Frequency

Number of times a behavior occurs

“T” hit head 2 times

Rate

Number of times the behavior occurs within a given time interval

“T” hit head 2 times in 30 seconds

Duration

How long a behavior last

“T” hit head quickly each hit last 3 seconds

Latency

Time between the antecedent and beginning of the behavior

2 minutes elapsed between start of circle and “T” hitting head

Magnitude

Intensity which behavior occurs

“T” hit head hard with hand leaving a red mark

# Sensory versus Behavior Meltdown

## Sensory Meltdown

- Not goal oriented
- Overstressed/Overwhelmed
- Continues without attention
- Reactive Mechanism
- May requires assistance to gain control
- Age: Throughout adulthood



## Tantrums

- “Want” directed
- Goal/Control driven
- Audience to perform
- Protective Mechanism
- Resolves if goals is accomplished
- Developmental: 1-5 years





# Sensory and Behavior Strategies

## Sensory Strategies

- Environmental Considerations
- Sensory Spaces
- Proprioceptive input
- Movement or vestibular activities
- Pressure touch
- Fidgets

DON'T  
GIVE  
UP!

## Behavior Strategies

- Reinforcement
  - Ignore
  - Modeling
  - Schedule
  - Choices
- Prompting/fading
  - Token System
  - Visual support
  - Social Stories
  - Redirection

# Screening tool

## Sensory

- The Sensory Processing Disorder Foundation lists the following (common red flags) signs of SPD by age:
  - In infants and Toddlers
  - In preschool aged children
  - School-aged children
- Informal checklist:  
*Sensorimotor History Questionnaire for Parents of Preschool Children* (spd Network)

## Behavior

- Motivation Assessment Scale
- Functional Assessment Interview
  - Early Childhood Functional Assessment Checklist (EC FACTS)

# Videos

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- 1 Behavioral/tantrum Video
- 1 Sensory meltdown video
- 1 Behavioral and sensory video

# Case Study

Child “A” enjoys circle time and will clap and sing the songs. During circle time “A” stands up and jumps in place. When the teacher reminds “A” to sit down, “A” will sit for a few seconds and then return to jumping.

# Case Study

Child “D” will remove the pieces from the puzzles and when the teacher comes over Child “D” will stop and just sit there quietly and look at the other kids. When the teacher tries to help Child “D” put the puzzle pieces into the puzzles Child “D” will continue to sit quietly, looking at the kids, and ignoring the teacher.

# Resources

## Sensory

□ Ayres, A. J. (2015). *Sensory Integration and the Child: Understanding Hidden Sensory Challenges*. Western Psychological Services: Los Angeles, CA

Bundy, A.C., Lane, S.J., & Murray, E.A (eds.) (2002). *Sensory Integration: Theory and Practice*. F.A. Davis: Philadelphia, P.A.

Miller, L.J. (2014). *Sensational Kids: Hope and Help for Children with Sensory Processing Disorder*. Tarcher Perigee.

Sensory Processing Disorder Foundation. (2016). *Sensory Processing Disorder: Possible Pathways to DSM-V*. Retrieved February 2016, from <http://www.spdfoundation.net/library/swg.first.html>

Sensory Processing Disorder Foundation (2016) from <http://www.spdfoundation.net>

## Behavior

Zero to Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families

Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI)

Positive Behavior Interventions & Support

Applied Behavior Analysis

**QUESTIONS?**