

Sensory or Behavior?

"People are not attention seekers, we are **connection** seekers. Behavior is communication for connection need, no matter how it is gotten."



Part 1: What is Sensory? What is Behavior?

- **Sensory:** This is a neurological need and it feels good to engage with.
- **Behavior:** This seeks to obtain a goal, always purposeful
 - Behavioral responses are environmentally/situationally dependent
 - Behavior is able to follow a Positive Behavior Plan to adjust/monitor behavior (Ex. 3 gold stars on your chart and you get the tablet).
- **NOTE: ALL** action seeks to communicate what words cannot
 - Behavior/Actions are our first form of communication and speaking is our second language.
 - Ex. We cried to state our needs as a baby before we every spoke our needs

Part 2: Sensory Processing Disorder

This is a dynamic in which the brain has a challenging time breaking down and understanding the information brought in by our senses.

- Sensory processing disorder often times causes social challenges and emotional difficulties through increased anxiety, and motor impairments which result in functional deficits.
- This presentation may be seen as having “behaviors” when in fact they may be seeking sensory input or they are over stimulated by sensory input

Need	Avoid
<p>OVERRESPONSIVE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The nervous system has a negative reaction to the input presented. (This is often times interpreted as ‘behavior’)	<p>UNDERRESPONSIVE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The nervous system has a limited response to the input.2. These individuals are often seen as lethargic having minimal to no response to pain, do not respond to verbal instructions.

3. They also may demonstrate increase physical actions such as hitting and kicking things/people in the environment in order to obtain the input their body is seeking.

SENSORY SEEKER

1. The nervous system seeks sensory input.
2. These individuals present with high energy.

SENSORY AVOIDER

1. The nervous system prevents interaction with this stimulus in any way possible.

Part 3: Sensory Systems

Sensory integration refers to the processing and organization of sensory information by the body from the environment.

Vestibular System: Receptors found in the inner ear. These provide information regarding back and forth and spinning movements and feedback regarding spatial orientation. Overall, this provides a sense of balance and stable basis for visual function

Sensory Avoiding

Avoids movement activities such as playing on playground equipment, leaving the ground, fear of stairs.

Sensory Seeker

Appears to be in constant motion, constantly "risk taking", moves quickly and bumps into nearby items

Proprioceptive System: Receptors found in muscles and joints. This provides feedback about our body's position in space (body awareness).

Sensory Dysfunction

The individual demonstrates poor awareness of limbs and has challenges grading their muscle use appropriately for gross motor tasks (ex. throwing a ball)

Sensory Seeker

Frequently seeks out deep pressure throughout body through hugs, clothing, the environment, etc.

Tactile System: Receptors found throughout the body, specifically the hands. This is the "touch" sense.

Sensory Avoider

Reacts negatively to unexpected touch,

Sensory Seeker

Prefers to frequently have something in their

appears as a picky eater and may appear as "overreacting" to pain input.

hands (ex. a fidget)

Visual System: These receptors are found in the eyes and assess/process the visual environment.

Sensory Avoider

Sensory Seeker

Complains about bright lights, covers eyes frequently or may get frequent headaches from light or are overwhelmed from visual input.

Seeks out visual stimulation

Effects a child's visual tracking, discrimination, and perception

Auditory System: These receptors are found in the ears and assess the environment in which we hear.

Sensory Avoider

Sensory Seeker

These individuals are fearful of loud noises, become upset at sudden loud noises and are observed to cover their ears frequently.

These individuals may make loud noises themselves, play loud music and appear distracted by noises in the environment.

Taste and Smell System: These receptors are found in the mouth, tongue and nose and assess the environment in which we orally intake and smell.

Sensory Avoider

Sensory Seeker

These individuals may be picky eaters, avoid new foods and resist strong smelling environment and demonstrate increased gagging.

These individuals may place nonfood items in their mouth, may frequently chew and may consistently seek food.

Part 4: Limbic System Meltdown vs. Tantrum



BOTH meltdowns deserve a safe place to happen.

BOTH meltdowns require support and co-regulation (peaceful presence).

BOTH meltdowns require processing and reassurance

Limbic System Meltdown:

This is not a tantrum, this is specifically sensory driven. When the nervous system becomes overwhelmed to the greatest degree, it puts the brain on pause. This is when the limbic system (emotions center) kicks into overdrive. **This is a situation in which the ENVIRONMENT must change, thus the response will immediately follow.**

- NO new learning or information is processed.
 - Telling your child to “calm down” or “practice your breathing” will not work.

Behavioral Meltdown:

This is often a response to an event or situation this is not pleasurable to a child. This is a developmentally appropriate for a young child to display. This seeks to change the outcome of the situation.

- Ex. The child is told 'no' to a preferred toy to purchase. When the child emotional 'melts down' this is a response to change the outcome/make feelings known.
- NO new learning or information is processed.
 - Telling your child to “calm down” or “practice your breathing” does not work.
- You have to wait this out then connect with the child.
 - Your behavior response during their meltdown MODELS the level to which they need to get to.

How do I know if it is a Tantrum or a Limbic System Meltdown?

- Assess the trigger-** Did this come at random or did something immediately happen prior to the behavior? If it is random, this is a limbic system meltdown.
- Change the environment-** If you remove the child from the situation and they immediately begin to calm, this is a limbic system meltdown. It is now time to understand your child's sensory needs.
- Is the child able to follow a Positive Behavior Plan?** (ex. 3 gold stars on your chart and you get the tablet)- If not, this is a sensory need and it is time to assess your child's sensory concerns.



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