



OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

**SPD!
Sensory Integration
Dysfunction!
Is This For Real?**

Some children can't handle sights, sounds and sensations

Sensation is the detection of stimuli (environmental or bodily events) whereas Perception is the organization and interpretation of sensory information. To perceive the world accurately the senses must first respond with the optimal level of activity needed to accurately detect the source of the stimulation. Senses that are under-sensitive operate with too low a level of activation. Conversely, senses that are over-sensitive operate at too high a level of activation.

Second, sensory stimuli are converted into neural energy and sent to the brain where a composite of the sensory information must be formed into a coherent whole in order for the source of stimulation to be properly perceived. Disturbances in either the detection or processing of stimuli can cause sensory integration problems. These children are often referred to as Sensory-Avoiders or Sensory-Seeking. Children with sensory integration problems react differently from most other children; Sensory-Avoiders are often described with such

terms as avoiders, overactive, emotional instability, clumsy, and sensory inappropriate.

Here at The Center School located in Highland Park New Jersey, a private non-profit school for bright students with learning and/or emotional challenges the OTs have been treating SPD (Sensory Processing Disorders) also known as sensory integration dysfunction since 1979, in our state-of-the-art Occupational Therapy Department.

Dr A. Jean Ayres a UCLA Psychologist and Occupational Therapist and a pioneer in the field, defined SPD as a mixed bag or syndrome, which involves difficulty handling information that comes in through the senses— not just touch, taste, smell, and sight, but also Proprioceptive and Vestibular senses, which tell us where our arms and legs are in relation to the rest of us and how our body is oriented toward gravity. Some children treated for SPD can't maintain an upright position at a desk; some are

so sensitive to touch that they cry when their nails are trimmed or their hair is combed or cut. Smells and sounds can also be overwhelming, for example the sound of a lawn mower, or vacuum.

Here at Center School, in addition to the therapy that is provided to the children, families get instructions on how to adjust their child's "sensory diets" to help them function better at school and at home.



Rona Stokes, M.S., O.T.R./L
Occupational Therapy Coordinator

THE CENTER SCHOOL



580 Old York Road, Branchburg, NJ
908.253.3870 • thecenterschool.com