

Other Examples of Sensory Experiences

HEARING

Hyper-sensitivities/Sensory avoidance :

- covers their ears to shield themselves from sound
- avoids places with a lot of noise -shops, restaurants
- Irritated/ agitated when exposed to specific noises
- trouble focusing when there is background noise
- discomfort with everyday sounds- hoovers, chewing
- hard to sleep due to even faint noises
- might pull back from lively social activities or outings
- bothered by background noises -lawnmowers
- often asks people to be quiet
- refuses to go to parades, concerts, sport events
- distracted by faint sounds – machines, clocks
- startled by loud or unexpected noises

Hypo-sensitivities/ Sensory seeking:

- may not respond to name being called/phone ringing
- hard to follow directions with background noise
- zones out in noisy environments
- not bothered by loud sounds -sirens/loud music
- heightened interest in sounds/ enjoys making noise
- asks others to repeat what they've said, even if quiet
- enjoys excessively loud music or TV
- not startled by surprise, loud noises
- talks to themselves through a task, often out loud

SIGHT

Hyper-sensitivities/Sensory avoidance:

- squints/covers eyes – to block out too much light
- distress in visually stimulating places - busy wallpapers, cluttered rooms
 - uncomfortable maintaining eye contact
 - disturbed by fast-moving/flashing Images on TV
 - avoids tasks that require a lot of visual focus -puzzles
 - struggles to distinguish between similar-looking objects
 - bothered by direct light -sunlight, desk lights
 - headaches - eye strain or overexposure
 - Intolerant of specific lighting, often fluorescent lights

Hypo-sensitivities/ Sensory seeking:

- difficulty copying from a board or following a map
- trouble recognising people
- problems distinguish between similar-looking objects
- little reaction to bright lights
- bumping into things
- waves hands or objects in front of eyes
- likes light-up spinning objects
- might struggle with eye-hand coordination

TOUCH

Hyper-sensitivities/Sensory avoidance:

- avoids touch
- might resist friendly or affectionate touch
- discomfort with clothing tags/ seams
- discomfort with certain textures – avoids certain food
- dislikes hair brushing, face washing, teeth brushing
- prefers certain clothing
- dislikes messy play
- reacts to minor cuts or scrapes, insect bites
- discomfort wearing shoes or socks / doesn't like being barefoot
- distressed by accidental brushes or touches
- distressed by raindrops, shower water, wind on skin
- avoids touching certain materials in blankets/ rugs

Hypo-sensitivities/ Sensory seeking:

- might not notice touch
- doesn't notice injuries
- fine motor skills difficulties
- might not notice dirty hands, runny nose
- seeks physical contact -wrestling
- too much/ little pressure when writing -breaking toys
- may unintentionally hurt others when playing
- mouthing objects
- touches everything and everyone
- seeks soothing surfaces or objects
- prefers hugs over other types of touch
- washes hands due to upset with dirt

SMELL

Hyper-sensitivities/Sensory avoidance:

- sensitive to even faint smells
- bothered by strong cooking or household smells
- headaches -after being exposed to certain smells
- nausea/vomiting – triggered by strong/particular smells
- smell of food feels overpowering
- may avoid places where there is strong smells
- parosmia -normal smells are distorted or unpleasant
- cacosmia -all smells are perceived as foul
- phantosmia - senses smells that aren't present

Hypo-sensitivities/ Sensory seeking:

- may have difficulty noticing smells
- often ask others to verify or identify smells for them.
- ignores or doesn't register unpleasant smells
- diminished sense of taste-closely linked with smell
- neglect of personal hygiene -body odour
- miss out on the joy of certain scents -flowers, baking
- interacts with objects by smelling them

TASTE

Hyper-sensitivities/Sensory avoidance:

- Resists trying new foods and avoids certain textures
- Food or drink temperature preferences
- gags on different food textures
- distress brushing teeth
- dislikes dental visits issues
- overreacts to oral discomfort - loose tooth etc
- avoids certain utensils -how they feel in their mouth
- dislikes mixed textured foods -chunky soup

Hypo-sensitivities/ Sensory seeking:

- overstuffing mouth with food
- mouthing, chewing, licking non-food items
- likes spicy foods
- difficulty chewing or swallowing
- drooling
- less/no reaction to oral injuries
- prefers crunchy or chewy foods
- chews clothing or body parts - fingers
- hums
- bites others

VESTIBULAR (balance)

Hyper-sensitivities/Sensory avoidance:

- afraid of movement activities -swinging, drives in car.
- feels sick/ dizzy during or after movement.
- disoriented if head position changes -bending /lying
- avoids quick movements or spinning
- fear of heights or places where the ground is uneven
- clings to people or objects, as afraid of falling
- balance difficulties - riding a bike
- avoids activities or sports with a lot of movement
- fear of falling, moves cautiously, avoids taking risks
- fears feet leaving the ground
- dislikes lifts and escalators - motion sickness
- avoids stairs and uneven surfaces

Hypo-sensitivities/ Sensory seeking:

- high energy levels
- seeks movement -spinning, swinging, or bouncing
- struggles to sit still -fidgets or squirms
- craves intense and fast movements, spinning
- prefers fast-paced or high-risk activities
- difficulty with balance
- co-ordination difficulties
- likes to rock and sway
- hard to keep focused, especially if not to moving
- bumps into things
- may have low muscle tone
- runs, jumps, hops instead of walking
- likes sudden or quick movements -going over bumps
- rocks, shakes leg, nods when sitting

PROPRIOCEPTION (movement)

Hyper-sensitivities/Sensory avoidance:

- constantly seeks rough play -wrestling, slamming
- craves physical contact, bear hugs
- loves pushing, pulling, and dragging objects
- frequently hits, bumps, or pushes peers
- chews on pens, straws, shirt sleeves, etc.
- doesn't understand personal space boundaries
- finds it hard to stay still/ constantly fidgets, moves
- often breaks objects, not knowing their own strength
- Walks/runs heavily
- bumps into things, difficulty coordinating their body
- throw things, slam doors, makes other loud noises
- leans against walls, doors, or other people
- seeks jumping, bumping, crashing activities
- kicks feet on the floor/chair while sitting at table
- bites or sucks fingers and objects
- prefers tight clothes, belts, hoods, and shoelaces
- grinds teeth throughout the day

Hypo-sensitivities/ Sensory seeking:

- prefers low key activities, reluctant to play
- prefers to stand by and watch others play
- frequently bumping into things or falling
- too much or too little force picking up objects, writing,
- difficulty with fine motor skills
- difficulty with gross motor skills
- problems with balance
- struggle to move through crowded/narrow spaces
- has a hard time learning new motor tasks
- difficulty with sequencing movements -dance, dressing
- slouches or leans on things for support.
- misjudges distance/weight/depth
- struggles knowing right from left

INTROCEPTION (internal feelings)

Hyper-sensitivities:

May get overwhelmed by feelings that are part of the body's day-to-day functioning, causing anxiety, stress and distraction as well as discomfort and pain, like:

- a small touch causes great pain
- feeling they have to go to the toilet all the time
- feeling full even with little food
- get distracted by their heartbeat being loud
- feeling great emotions at small things
- rejection sensitivity

Hypo-sensitive:

May have difficulty tuning in to their own body's internal needs like:

- becoming dehydrated because they didn't drink
- forgetting to go to the toilet- constipation
- not noticing they are hungry
- sluggish and unable to move
- not noticing pain after an injury