

TIPS FOR SENSORY NEEDS

(TACTILE)

What are the implications of Tactile Over-Responsiveness for the school setting?

These children can be very sensitive to physical contact. They find light touch, such as someone brushing against them, very alerting or even painful. Some may walk on their tiptoes. These children can avoid messy play, contact sports and close proximity to peers. They can also be sensitive to clothing and food textures.

How can we support Over-Responsiveness to Tactile stimuli?

- Maintain designated seating arrangements and standing positions in lines, which reduce proximity to peers.
- Let the child leave a task/area early, in order to avoid large groups and busy corridors during transitions.
- Schedule time-limited opportunities for messy play, using gloves, a paintbrush or gradual finger touching.
- They may need to try new food with initial smelling and touching, starting with preferable textures.
- Provide regular proprioception, such as deep pressure massage and pushing/pulling/lifting weighted objects.
- Remove clothing labels and allow them to wear seamless and tight-fit materials.
- Promote engagement in non-contact activities - running, tennis, gymnastics, nature walks, treasure hunts.



What are the implications of Tactile Under-Responsiveness for the school setting?

These children can engage in excessive touching. They may frequently bump into furniture or other children, due to reduced spatial awareness. Some can show a lack of reaction to touch or be unaware of cuts and bruises. When using a pencil and other utensils, they can find it hard to apply an appropriate grip and level of pressure.

How can we support Under-Responsiveness to Tactile stimuli?

- Provide stimulation through fidget objects, a strip of velcro on or under their desk or therabands.
- Create a sensory diet with opportunities for messy play with water, paint, lotions and shaving foam.
- Enable them to explore textures with feely books and objects hidden in an opaque box or a sand tray.
- Use their name or a visual cue to gain attention. Model dressing in front of a mirror or with visual prompts.
- Practice writing on a range of surfaces and textures. Experiment with pencil grips and weighted cutlery.
- Model appropriate proximity using photos, carpet squares, coloured tape on the floor and Social Stories.
- Prioritise contact activities with clear structure and boundaries, such as tug-of-war or passing an object.

