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To contact Anna:

New email address:

Email:
annatulleman@gmail.com

Web:
www.annatulleman.com

Anna Tullemans
PO box 242
Redcliffe Qld 4020
Australia

M: 0419 168 742

Hello everyone and welcome to Term 3.

There have been lots of people asking about sensory issues and how they impact on learning, so this newsletter has some information and ideas for you to try.

We do need to remember that behaviour issues can be caused by sensory

sensitivities and a lack of communication skills. **Remember that any pre acquired skills will decrease when sensory sensitivities are in play.**

Enjoy the newsletter.

Anna

Sensory Sensitivities

Do any of you have sensory issues? If you are like me, you will have at least one. As many of you know from my workshops, my sensory issue is spiders. I find it very difficult to concentrate or work if I know that there is a spider in the room. It's the legs that I cannot stand: long and thin and sticky!! Yuck! However I can communicate to you what it is that is making me very nervous.

Many ASD students experience the same reactions to their sensory sensitivities but show them in a different way. However their sensory sensitivities are not usually spiders. They are usually something to do with heat, light, sound, visuals, touch, or their proprioception/vestibular areas. Also when their sensations reach overload they are usually not able to tell us that this is what they are experiencing, and we usually see disruptive behaviour, defiant behaviour or just plain meltdowns.

We see many behaviour issues that can be associated with sensory issues and overload, and, a lack of communication skills in interpreting and being able to acknowledge and name these sensitivities and they all add to the difficulty. Following are some examples of interventions:

Sound

The sound of vacuum cleaner is overwhelming

- Wear earplugs
- Ask child to vacuum and use iPod/headphones at the same time

Light

Screams in shopping centres, difficulty picking an object from background

- When shopping wear a hat low over eyes
- Wear headphones/iPod
- Give check list so he can cross things off list (helps to desensitise)

Visual

Wears hat low over eyes, running away in shopping centre

- Slowly desensitise by doing small amounts of shopping with allocated specified times: use a sensory toy to hold
- Use sunglasses
- Don't hang things from ceilings, Don't use too many colours

Book Review

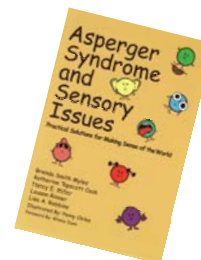
Asperger Syndrome and Sensory Issues

- Practical solutions for making sense of the world

Brenda Smith Myles et al

AAPC

Available through "Book in hand" – 07 3885 8525



I found this book to be very informative and helpful to many parents and professionals in explaining sensory issues. The first part of the book concentrates on sensory processing, Asperger and associated sensory characteristics and, assessing sensory processing issues. It has some sample pages of checklists that will help in assessing and identifying sensory processing issues and also includes a list of resources for formal assessments. The second part describes incidents, interpretations of these incidents and interventions that can be easily used in a classroom or at home.

This is a great book. It has practical advice for analysing sensory processing difficulties and it will also help you design intervention strategies that will enable our Asperger people to be more successful.



Sensory Activities

Following are some fun activities that can be used to help with proprioception, vestibular and other sensory sensitivities.

Simon Says:

This activity can be used simply to “find where your body and your extremities are” and to teach how to follow a sequence.

- “Simon says: touch your toes”
- “Simon says: touch your middle finger on your left hand”

This can also be used to follow a sequence of events or a set of instructions:

- “Simon says: go to the door, open the door and get the book off the table” etc



Piggyback, Horsey and Wheelbarrow rides:

Children with vestibular hypersensitivity tend to have a low tolerance for activities that involve movement. They also have difficulty changing direction and speed and maintaining positions. Children with hyposensitivity are constantly moving and are usually clumsy or uncoordinated. This activity will help both.

- As you are doing the piggyback/horsey rides fall slightly left and then slightly right, backwards and forwards. The child will have to bring his body in line with yours to stay upright. Then do a “bucking horse” so the child has to hold on and right himself.

Gross motor input

The following are easy to do at home and will help with gross motor and coordination.

- Carrying and/or dragging a heavy basket of clothes
- Carrying groceries
- Anything requiring pushing or pulling trolleys, baskets etc
- Pulling a sheet or blanket sled with a heavy object inside (or the child inside) around the house



Wrestling

To try and avoid a meltdown do some wrestling on the floor

- Alternate your weight on top and then the child’s weight on top, this will help the child to “centre“ himself and his body

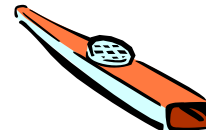
Sensory Incidents, their Meanings and Interventions

Event	Explanation	Intervention
Messy handwriting, Can't stay within lines	Doesn't receive appropriate sensations to plan and design a sequence of what comes next	Have the child engage in gross - motor activities before doing fine motor skills activity
Drags hands along the wall when walking	Seeks tactile input Needs proprioceptive input to help him feel comfortable	Have the child carry something heavy, container with materials to be used in class, laundry basket. Allow child to hop, skip or jump down hallway. Carry weighted bag (rice bag etc) while walking.
Has difficulty keeping hands and feet to self when sitting	Craves tactile input Doesn't understand about personal space	Sit with weighted bag on legs. Provide visual or physical boundary such as tape, carpet square etc. Provide a fidget item (sensory toy).
Talks himself through a task	Sound of own voice may block out other auditory input	Hold a sensory toy. Teach him to use a lower volume.
Steps on peers hands or feet when talking Misses chair when attempting to sit down or sits on peers when group is on floor	Poor awareness of body and his extremities Difficulty planning motor actions	Use perceptual motor programmes. Place student at edges of groups. Allow student to carry weighted object when attempting to sit with the group eg heavy book, heavy sensory toy, game that is to be played.
Dislikes being hugged, kissed or touched unless he initiates	Unexpected or light touch may be painful and/or uncomfortable	Give the child pre warning of the touch: "I am going to give you a hug!" Remind family members of the child's preferences and to please respect his wishes.
Chews on clothes, pens, pencils etc	May be seeking proprioceptive input, find it calming or like the tactile input of this item.	Give appropriate chewing item, ie hard candy. Mouth exercise with a kazoo.
Difficulty paying attention	Can't tune out extraneous noises	Get the child's attention before giving instructions. Give instructions one at a time.
Over reacts when boys jostle in hallways	Doesn't like to be touched. Light touch may be painful	Role play jostling in hallway. Gradually desensitise to touch. Use heavy/light massage.
Will not eat certain foods. Will only eat one food type at a time.	Overwhelming sensory input from either taste or texture.	Encourage activities involving mouth. (Whistles, bubbles, kazoos). Play with food: feel textures: squishy, hard, medium Use fingers and/or utensils to Play with food.

Sensory Toys

Sensory toys can be used in a number of ways. They can be used to:

- Promote concentration skills
- Teach effective listening
- Motivate
- Reward
- Help keep the body quiet (weighted bags of rice etc)
- Help to line up



Following are a number of examples of sensory toys. Both Sue Larkey and I stock a number of different toys which you can view on our websites.

- Squishy balls, mesh balls, dino balls, stress balls in different shapes such as computers (for quiet hands and feet)
- Kazoos, and flutes and blowing bubbles (for mouth sensitivities)
- Chewy tubes (for children that chew everything in sight, available from Sue Larkey)



To order books please fill out this form and send with your cheque:

Name

Address

If you would like to receive the newsletter via email: Post Code

Email

ABN: 44 458 927 927

- \$50.00 The Essential Guide to Successful Secondary School
- \$45.00 Teacher Assistants Big Red Book of Ideas
- \$29.00 How To stop Your Words From Bumping
- \$25.00 Talking to Family and Friends
- \$25.00 Working with Teachers
- \$15.00 I'm Going to School (workbook for students entering school)
- \$ 6.00 Fun Side of Asperger
- \$18.00 Which School

Prices include postage and handling (Australian dollars prices as at 2008)

\$.....Total

Please make cheques payable to:
Anna Tullemans
PO Box 242
Redcliffe Qld 4020
Australia