

Month 1: Sensory Processing Introduction

Objectives of this Month

- to increase caregiver knowledge of sensory processing and the importance of providing children with sensory input
- to provide caregivers with age-appropriate sensory activities to carry out
- to provide children with appropriate sensory input

What is Sensory Processing?

- Sensory processing is how our nervous system (brain) takes in and uses information from the world.
- The sensory systems include visual* (sight), auditory* (hearing), olfactory* (smell), gustatory* (taste), tactile* (touch), vestibular*, and proprioception.*
- Sensory input is constantly bombarding our nervous system. It is our brain's job to determine if it needs our attention and how important it is. For example, if you hear a car honk while you are driving, you must react differently than if you hear it while you are in your house.

Importance of Providing Sensory Input

- Sensory input provided throughout the day facilitates healthy brain development
- Providing sensory input regularly can work to:
 - o Increase the child's ability to manage multi-sensory input
 - o Increase the child's ability to interpret the sensory input appropriately
 - o Improve balance, posture, and bilateral coordination
 - o Facilitate efficient self-regulation*, and improve attention and tolerance
- Difficulties with sensory processing can influence how a child participates in his daily activities, like classroom activities, dressing, and play.

Who Benefits from Sensory Activities?

- 5-10% of children without an identified disability present with sensory processing difficulty
- 50-90% of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- 40-88% of children with other diagnosis have sensory processing difficulty

Types of Sensory Experiences

1. Inhibitory: activities that decrease the child's arousal level (or level of alertness),
2. Excitatory: activities that increase the child's arousal level (or level of alertness),
3. Organizing: activities that help bring the child's arousal level to one that is "just right" (ready to complete a task)