Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD)

Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD), also known as Sensory Integration Disorder (SID) shows up in children who are placed in a hospital-like setting for a long period of time, or in children who have experienced significant trauma.

SPD occurs when sensory signals are not organized into proper responses, meaning that certain parts of the brain are not receiving the information they need to process information correctly. As a result, a child may have a hard time acting upon the information received in their brain, leading to clumsiness, depression, behavioral problems and anxiety.

At this time, there are no known causes of SPD. Some theories postulate there may be a tie to genetics, but like many other developmental disorders there could be many factors involved, including environmental ones.

Signs of SPD

The following are some signs of SPD:

Infants/Toddlers

- Problems eating/sleeping
- Hardly plays with toys

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SPD and Foster Care Adoption

Many children develop sensory integration through normal childhood activities. For some children, however, this sensory integration does not develop like it should. A lack of stimulation or movement can impede a child's normal sensory integration. Sensory deprivation at a young age in addition to the use of drugs and alcohol

- Shows resistance when getting dressed
- Uncomfortable wearing clothes
- Does not like to be held or cuddled

Pre-Schoolers

- Over-sensitive to touch, noise, smells, etc.
- Poor motor-skills, clumsy
- Constantly moving
- Long, drawn out temper-tantrums

Elementary School

- Over-sensitive to touch, noise, smells, etc.
- Very distracted, fidgety
- Oblivious to pain
- Difficulty with motor coordination or handwriting

Adolescents and teens

- Over-sensitive to touch, noise, smells, etc.
- Constantly moving
- Impulsive
- Have a hard time staying focused
- Difficulty with motor coordinator or handwriting

For more signs and symptoms, please visit SPD Foundation's SPD Red Flags page.

Treatment for SPD

One of the most common treatments for SPD is Occupational Therapy with a Sensory Integration focus. During this type of therapy children learn how to detect, regulate, interpret and execute responses to different sensations, allowing them the ability to move forward with everyday activities. These types of everyday activities can include completing schoolwork, eating, getting dressed, sleeping, socializing with friends, and so on.

while a child is in utero have both been linked to SPD. All of the above are things a child in foster care may experience.

Additional Information & Articles

Sensory Smarts - Raising a Sensory Smart Child

Sensory Processing Disorder Foundation - About SPD

Rainbow Kids - Sensory Integration Disorder in Adopted Children

Adoptive Families - When Senses Don't Make Sense

Resources

SPD Foundation

SPD Resource Center

The Out-of-Sync Child

Raising a Sensory Smart Child: The Definitive Handbook for Helping Your Child with Sensory

The focus of OT is to examine the factors that may be causing SPD, and then modify a child's behaviors and/or situation. The goal of OT is to help children develop automatic and appropriate responses to daily sensations, while building their social relationships, self-esteem, self-regulation, and motor capabilities.

More information on OT can be found on the SPD Foundation's page Occupational Therapy.

Other treatments include **Listening Therapy**, **Combination Therapy**, and **Complimentary Therapies**. You can learn more about each of these types of therapies on the SPD Foundation's page Listening and Other Therapies.

Find a treatment center near you.

Processing Issues by Lindsey Biel and Nancy Peske

Answers to Questions Teachers Ask About Sensory Integration: Forms, Checklists, and Practical Tools for Teachers and Parents by Carol Stock Kranowitz

Challenging Behavior in Young Children: Understanding, Preventing and Responding Effectively by Barbara Kaiser